RAMONA

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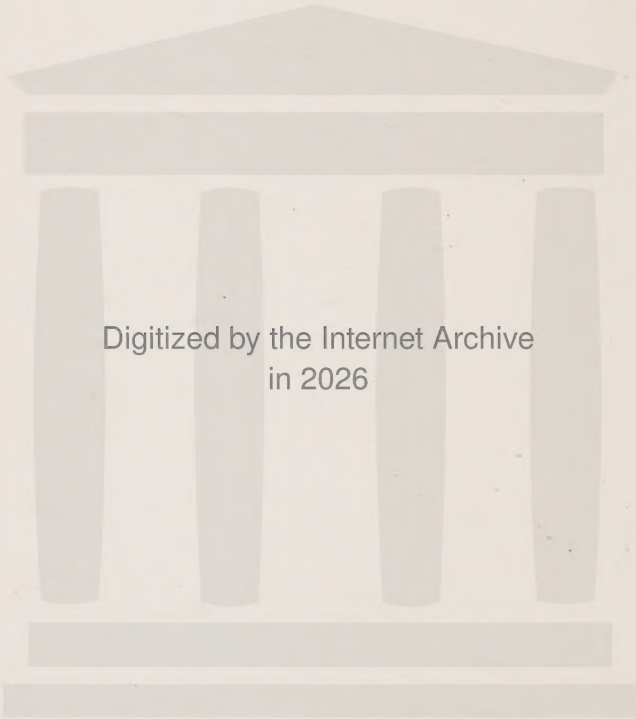
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MONTEREY EDITION

RAMONA

VOL. II.

RAMONA

A STORY

BY

HELEN HUNT JACKSON
(H. H.)

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
SUSAN COOLIDGE

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY SANDHAM

IN TWO VOLUMES
VOL. II.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME TWO

FROM DRAWINGS BY HENRY SANDHAM

"'Majella, Majella,' cried Alessandro" . . . *Frontispiece*

PAGE

"Alessandro saw Ramona's figure dimly in the gloom" . 20

"She looked like a saint" 41

"Clasping Carmena's hand" 56

"'The winds of the valley shall love you'" 109

"'Eyes of the sky,' exclaimed Ysidro" 119

Meeting of Felipe and Salvierderra 154

"'We are lost, if we stay here!' cried Alessandro" . . 171

Don Felipe 226

Father Salvierderra 245

"'Señor, I will explain'" 277

"'Ramona, my love!'" 305

DECORATIVE HEADINGS

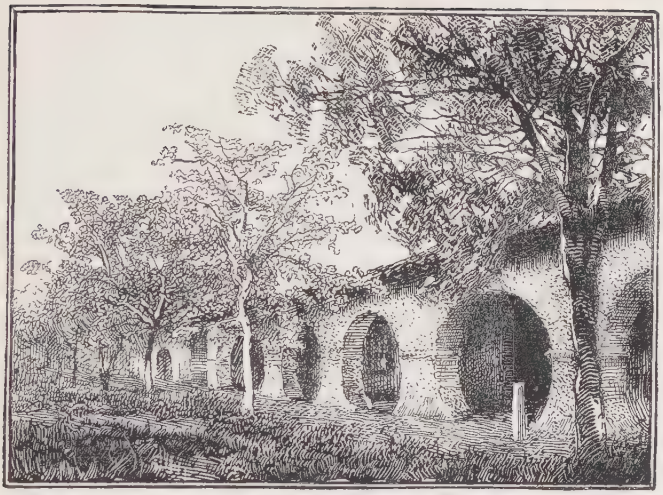
VOLUME TWO

FROM DRAWINGS BY HENRY SANDHAM

Chapter		Page
XV.	San Juan Bautista Mission	3
XVI.	General View of San Luis Rey Mission	27
XVII.	Entrance to Graveyard, Temecula	46
XVIII.	Pala	71
XIX.	San Diego Mission	95
XX.	Ramona's Bedroom, San Pasquale	116
XXI.	San Luis Obispo Mountain from Site of Mission	145
XXII.	Sheep Corral and Hut	166
XXIII.	House of Indian Agency Doctor	197
XXIV.	San Jacinto Mountain	223
XXV.	San Juan Capistrano Mission, showing door to room where Felipe found Antonio	242
XXVI.	Monterey Bay	273

RAMONA

VOL. II. — 1



XV

ALESSANDRO'S first answer to this cry of Ramona's was a tightening of his arms around her; closer and closer he held her, till it was almost pain; she could hear the throbs of his heart, but he did not speak. Then, letting his arms fall, taking her hand in his, he laid it on his forehead reverently, and said, in a voice which was so husky and trembling she could barely understand his words: "My Señorita knows that my life is hers. She can ask me to go into the fire or into the sea, and neither the fire nor the sea would frighten me; they would but make me glad for her sake. But I cannot take my Señorita's life to throw it away. She is tender; she would die;

she cannot lie on the earth for a bed, and have no food to eat. My Señorita does not know what she says."

His solemn tone; this third-person designation, as if he were speaking of her, not with her, almost as if he were thinking aloud to God rather than speaking to her, merely calmed and strengthened, did not deter Ramona. "I am strong; I can work too, Alessandro. You do not know. We can both work. I am not afraid to lie on the earth; and God will give us food," she said.

"That was what I thought, my Señorita, until now. When I rode away that morning, I had it in my thoughts, as you say, that if you were not afraid, I would not be; and that there would at least always be food, and I could make it that you should never suffer; but, Señorita, the saints are displeased. They do not pray for us any more. It is as my father said, they have forsaken us. These Americans will destroy us all. I do not know but they will presently begin to shoot us and poison us, to get us all out of the country, as they do the rabbits and the gophers; it would not be any worse than what they have done. Would not you rather be dead, Señorita, than be as I am to-day?"

Each word he spoke but intensified Ramona's determination to share his lot. "Alessandro," she interrupted, "there are many men among your people who have wives, are there not?"

"Yes, Señorita!" replied Alessandro, wonderingly.

"Have their wives left them and gone away, now that this trouble has come?"

"No, Señorita!" still more wonderingly; "how could they?"

"They are going to stay with them, help them to earn money, try to make them happier, are they not?"

"Yes, Señorita." Alessandro began to see whither these questions tended. It was not unlike the Señora's tactics, the way in which Ramona narrowed in her lines of interrogation.

"Do the women of your people love their husbands very much?"

"Very much, Señorita." A pause. It was very dark now. Alessandro could not see the hot currents running swift and red over Ramona's face; even her neck changed color as she asked her last question. "Do you think any one of them loves her husband more than I love you, Alessandro?"

Alessandro's arms were again around her, before the words were done. Were not such words enough to make a dead man live? Almost; but not enough to make such a love as Alessandro's selfish. Alessandro was silent.

"You know there is not one!" said Ramona, impetuously.

"Oh, it is too much!" cried Alessandro, throwing his arms up wildly. Then, drawing her to him again, he said, the words pouring out breathless: "My Señorita, you take me to the door of heaven, but I

dare not go in. I know it would kill you, Señorita, to live the life we must live. Let me go, dearest Señorita; let me go! It had been better if you had never seen me."

"Do you know what I was going to do, Alessandro, if you had not come?" said Ramona. "I was going to run away from the Señora's house, all alone, and walk all the way to Santa Barbara, to Father Salvierderra, and ask him to put me in the convent at San Juan Bautista; and that is what I will do now if you leave me!"

"Oh, no, no, Señorita, my Señorita, you will not do that! My beautiful Señorita in the convent! No, no!" cried Alessandro, greatly agitated.

"Yes, if you do not let me come with you, I shall do it. I shall set out to-morrow."

Her words carried conviction to Alessandro's soul. He knew she would do as she said. "Even that would not be so dreadful as to be hunted like a wild beast, Señorita; as you may be, if you come with me."

"When I thought you were dead, Alessandro, I did not think the convent would be dreadful at all. I thought it would be peace; and I could do good, teaching the children. But if I knew you were alive, I could never have peace; not for one minute have peace, Alessandro! I would rather die, than not be where you are. Oh, Alessandro, take me with you!"

Alessandro was conquered. "I will take you, my most beloved Señorita," he said gravely, — no lover's gladness in his tone, and his voice was hollow; "I

will take you. Perhaps the saints will have mercy on you, even if they have forsaken me and my people!"

"Your people are my people, dearest; and the saints never forsake any one who does not forsake them. You will be glad all our lives long, Alessandro," cried Ramona; and she laid her head on his breast in solemn silence for a moment, as if registering a vow.

Well might Felipe have said that he would hold himself fortunate if any woman ever loved him as Ramona loved Alessandro.

When she lifted her head, she said timidly, now that she was sure, "Then you will take your Ramona with you, Alessandro?"

"I will take you with me till I die; and may the Madonna guard you, my Ramona," replied Alessandro, clasping her to his breast, and bowing his head upon hers. But there were tears in his eyes, and they were not tears of joy; and in his heart he said, as in his rapturous delight when he first saw Ramona bending over the brook under the willows he had said aloud, "My God! what shall I do!"

It was not easy to decide on the best plan of procedure now. Alessandro wished to go boldly to the house, see Señor Felipe, and if need be the Señora. Ramona quivered with terror at the bare mention of it. "You do not know the Señora, Alessandro," she cried, "or you would never think of it. She has been terrible all this time. She hates me so that she would kill me if she dared. She pretends that she will do

nothing to prevent my going away; but I believe at the last minute she would throw me in the well in the court-yard, rather than have me go with you."

"I would never let her harm you," said Alessandro. "Neither would Señor Felipe."

"She turns Felipe round her finger as if he were soft wax," answered Ramona. "She makes him of a hundred minds in a minute, and he can't help himself. Oh, I think she is in league with the fiends, Alessandro! Don't dare to come near the house; I will come here as soon as every one is asleep. We must go at once."

Ramona's terrors overruled Alessandro's judgment, and he consented to wait for her at the spot where they now stood. She turned back twice to embrace him again. "Oh, my Alessandro, promise me that you will not stir from this place till I come," she said.

"I will be here when you come," he said.

"It will not be more than two hours," she said, "or three, at the utmost. It must be nine o'clock now."

She did not observe that Alessandro had evaded the promise not to leave the spot. That promise Alessandro would not have given. He had something to do in preparation for this unexpected flight of Ramona. In her innocence, her absorption in her thoughts of Alessandro and of love, she had never seemed to consider how she would make this long journey. As Alessandro had ridden towards Temecula, eighteen days ago, he had pictured him-

self riding back on his fleet, strong Benito, and bringing Antonio's matchless little dun mare for Ramona to ride. Only eighteen short days ago; and as he was dreaming that very dream, he had looked up and seen Antonio on the little dun mare, galloping towards him like the wind, the overridden creature's breath coming from her like pants of a steam-engine, and her sides dripping blood, where Antonio, who loved her, had not spared the cruel spurs; and Antonio, seeing him, had uttered a cry, and flinging himself off, came with a bound to his side, and with gasps between his words told him. Alessandro could not remember the words, only that after them he set his teeth, and dropping the bridle, laid his head down between Benito's ears, and whispered to him; and Benito never stopped, but galloped on all that day, till he came into Temecula; and there Alessandro saw the roofless houses, and the wagons being loaded, and the people running about, the women and children wailing; and then they showed him the place where his father lay on the ground, under the tule, and jumping off Benito he let him go, and that was the last he ever saw of him. Only eighteen days ago! And now here he was, under the willows, — the same copse where he first halted, at his first sight of Ramona; and it was night, dark night, and Ramona had been there, in his arms; she was his; and she was coming back presently to go away with him, — where? He had no home in the wide world to which to take her, — and this poor beast he had

ridden from Temecula, had it strength enough left to carry her? Alessandro doubted. He had himself walked more than half the distance, to spare the creature, and yet there had been good pasture all the way; but the animal had been too long starved to recover quickly. In the Pachanga cañon, where they had found refuge, the grass was burned up by the sun, and the few horses taken over there had suffered wretchedly; some had died. But Alessandro, even while his arms were around Ramona, had revolved in his mind a project he would not have dared to confide to her. If Baba, Ramona's own horse, was still in the corral, Alessandro could without difficulty lure him out. He thought it would be no sin. At any rate, if it were, it could not be avoided. The Señorita must have a horse, and Baba had always been her own; had followed her about like a dog ever since he could run; in fact, the only taming he had ever had, had been done by Ramona, with bread and honey. He was intractable to others; but Ramona could guide him by a wisp of his silky mane. Alessandro also had nearly as complete control over him; for it had been one of his greatest pleasures, during the summer, when he could not see Ramona, to caress and fondle her horse, till Baba knew and loved him next to his young mistress. If only Baba were in the corral, all would be well. As soon as the sound of Ramona's footsteps had died away, Alessandro followed with quick but stealthy steps; keeping well down in the bottom, below the willows, he

skirted the terrace where the artichoke-patch and the sheepfolds lay, and then turned up to approach the corral from the farther side. There was no light in any of the herdsmen's huts. They were all asleep. That was good. Well Alessandro knew how sound they slept; many a night while he slept there with them he had walked twice over their bodies as they lay stretched on skins on the floor, — out and in without rousing them. If only Baba would not give a loud whinny. Leaning on the corral-fence, Alessandro gave a low, hardly audible whistle. The horses were all in a group together at the farther end of the corral. At the sound there was a slight movement in the group; and one of them turned and came a pace or two towards Alessandro.

"I believe that is Baba himself," thought Alessandro; and he made another low sound. The horse quickened his steps; then halted, as if he suspected some mischief.

"Baba," whispered Alessandro. The horse knew his name as well as any dog; knew Alessandro's voice too, but the sagacious creature seemed instinctively to know that here was an occasion for secrecy and caution. If Alessandro whispered, he, Baba, would whisper back; and it was little more than a whispered whinny which he gave, as he trotted quickly to the fence, and put his nose to Alessandro's face, rubbing and kissing and giving soft whinnying sighs.

"Hush! hush! Baba," whispered Alessandro, as

if he were speaking to a human being. "Hush!" and he proceeded cautiously to lift off the upper rails and bushes of the fence. The horse understood instantly; and as soon as the fence was a little lowered, leaped over it and stood still by Alessandro's side, while he replaced the rails, smiling to himself, spite of his grave anxiety, to think of Juan Can's wonder in the morning as to how Baba had managed to get out of the corral.

This had taken only a few moments. It was better luck than Alessandro had hoped for; emboldened by it, he began to wonder if he could not get the saddle too. The saddles, harnesses, bridles, and all such things hung on pegs in an open barn, such as is constantly to be seen in Southern California; as significant a testimony, in matter of climate, as any Signal Service Report could be, — a floor and a roof; no walls, only corner posts to hold the roof. Nothing but summer-houses on a large scale are the South California barns. Alessandro stood musing. The longer he thought, the greater grew his desire for that saddle.

"Baba, if only you knew what I wanted of you, you 'd lie down on the ground here and wait while I got the saddle. But I dare not risk leaving you. Come, Baba!" and he struck down the hill again, the horse following him softly. When he got down below the terrace, he broke into a run, with his hand in Baba's mane, as if it were a frolic; and in a few moments they were safe in the willow copse, where

Alessandro's poor pony was tethered. Fastening Baba with the same lariat, Alessandro patted him on the neck, pressed his face to his nose, and said aloud, "Good Baba, stay here till the Señorita comes." Baba whinnied.

"Why should n't he know the Señorita's name! I believe he does!" thought Alessandro, as he turned and again ran swiftly back to the corral. He felt strong now, — felt like a new man. Spite of all the terror, joy thrilled him. When he reached the corral, all was yet still. The horses had not moved from their former position. Throwing himself flat on the ground, Alessandro crept on his breast from the corral to the barn, several rods' distance. This was the most hazardous part of his adventure; every other moment he paused, lay motionless for some seconds, then crept a few paces more. As he neared the corner where Ramona's saddle always hung, his heart beat. Sometimes, of a warm night, Luigo slept on the barn floor. If he were there to-night, all was lost. Groping in the darkness, Alessandro pulled himself up on the post, felt for the saddle, found it, lifted it, and in a trice was flat on the ground again, drawing the saddle along after him. Not a sound had he made, that the most watchful of sheep-dogs could hear.

"Ha, old Capitan, caught you napping this time!" said Alessandro to himself, as at last he got safe to the bottom of the terrace, and, springing to his feet, bounded away with the saddle on his shoulders. It was a weight for a starving man to carry, but he

felt it not, for the rejoicing he had in its possession. Now his Señorita would go in comfort. To ride Baba was to be rocked in a cradle. If need be, Baba would carry them both, and never know it; and it might come to that, Alessandro thought, as he knelt by the side of his poor beast, which was stretched out on the ground exhausted; Baba standing by, looking down in scornful wonder at this strange new associate.

"The saints be praised!" thought Alessandro, as he seated himself to wait. "This looks as if they would not desert my Señorita."

Thoughts whirled in his brain. Where should they go first? What would be best? Would they be pursued? Where could they hide? Where should he seek a new home?

It was bootless thinking, until Ramona was by his side. He must lay each plan before her. She must decide. The first thing was to get to San Diego, to the priest, to be married. That would be three days' hard ride; five for the exhausted Indian pony. What should they eat on the way? Ah! Alessandro bethought him of the violin at Hartsel's. Mr. Hartsel would give him money on that; perhaps buy it. Then Alessandro remembered his own violin. He had not once thought of it before. It lay in its case on a table in Señor Felipe's room when he came away. Was it possible? No, of course it could not be possible that the Señorita would think to bring it. What would she bring? She would be wise, Alessandro was sure.

How long the hours seemed as he sat thus plotting and conjecturing; more and more thankful, as each hour went by, to see the sky still clouded, the darkness dense. "It must have been the saints, too, that brought me on a night when there was no moon," he thought; and then he said again, devout and simple-minded man that he was, "They mean to protect my Señorita; they will let me take care of her."

Ramona was threading a perilous way, through great difficulties. She had reached her room unobserved, so far as she could judge. Luckily for her, Margarita was in bed with a terrible toothache, for which her mother had given her a strong sleeping-draught. Margarita was disposed of. If she had not been, Ramona would never have got away, for Margarita would have known that she had been out of the house for two hours, and would have watched to see what it meant.

Ramona came in through the court-yard; she dared not go by the veranda, sure that Felipe and his mother were sitting there still, for it was not late.

As she entered her room, she heard them talking. She closed one of her windows, to let them know she was there. Then she knelt at the Madonna's feet, and in an inaudible whisper told her all she was going to do, and prayed that she would watch over her and Alessandro, and show them where to go.

"I know she will! I am sure she will!" whispered Ramona to herself as she rose from her knees.

Then she threw herself on her bed, to wait till the Señora and Felipe should be asleep. Her brain was alert, clear. She knew exactly what she wished to do. She had thought that all out, more than two weeks ago, when she was looking for Alessandro hour by hour.

Early in the summer Alessandro had given to her, as curiosities, two of the large nets which the Indian women use for carrying all sorts of burdens. They are woven out of the fibres of a flax-like plant, and are strong as iron. The meshes being large, they are very light; are gathered at each end, and fastened to a band which goes around the forehead. In these can be carried on the back, with comparative ease, heavier loads than could be lifted in any other way. Until Ramona recollected these, she had been perplexed to know how she should carry the things which she had made up her mind it would be right for her to take, — only a few; simply necessaries; one stuff gown and her shawls; the new altar-cloth, and two changes of clothes; that would not be a great deal; she had a right to so much, she thought, now that she had seen the jewels in the Señora's keeping. "I will tell Father Salvierderra exactly what I took," she thought, "and ask him if it was too much." She did not like to think that all these clothes she must take had been paid for with the Señora Moreno's money.

And Alessandro's violin. Whatever else she left, that must go. What would life be to Alessandro

without a violin! And if they went to Los Angeles, he might earn money by playing at dances. Already Ramona had devised several ways by which they could both earn money.

There must be also food for the journey. And it must be good food, too; wine for Alessandro. Anguish filled her heart as she recalled how gaunt he looked. "Starving," he said they had been. Good God! Starving! And she had sat down each day at loaded tables, and seen, each day, good food thrown to the dogs to eat.

It was long before the Señora went to her room; and long after that before Felipe's breathing had become so deep and regular that Ramona dared feel sure that he was asleep. At last she ventured out. All was dark; it was past midnight.

"The violin first!" she said; and creeping into the dining-room, and through the inner door to Felipe's room, she brought it out, rolled it in shawl after shawl, and put it in the net with her clothes. Then she stole out, with this net on her back, "like a true Indian woman as I am," she said, almost gayly, to herself, — through the court-yard, around the southeast corner of the house, past the garden, down to the willows, where she laid down her load, and went back for the second.

This was harder. Wine she was resolved to have and bread and cold meat. She did not know so well where to put her hand on old Marda's possessions as on her own, and she dared not strike a

light. She made several journeys to the kitchen and pantry before she had completed her store. Wine, luckily, she found in the dining-room, — two full bottles; also milk, which she poured into a leathern flask which hung on the wall in the veranda.

Now all was ready. She leaned from her window, and listened to Felipe's breathing. "How can I go without bidding him good-by?" she said. "How can I?" and she stood irresolute.

"Dear Felipe! Dear Felipe! He has always been so good to me! He has done all he could for me! I wish I dared kiss him. I will leave a note for him."

Taking a pencil and paper, and a tiny wax taper, whose light would hardly be seen across a room, she slipped once more into the dining-room, knelt on the floor behind the door, lighted her taper, and wrote:

"DEAR FELIPE, — Alessandro has come, and I am going away with him to-night. Don't let anything be done to us, if you can help it. I don't know where we are going. I hope, to Father Salvierderra. I shall love you always. Thank you, dear Felipe, for all your kindness.

"RAMONA."

It had not taken a moment. She blew out her taper, and crept back into her room. Felipe's bed was now moved close to the wall of the house. From her window she could reach its foot. Slowly, cautiously, she stretched out her arm and dropped

the little paper on the coverlet, just over Felipe's feet. There was a risk that the Señora would come out in the morning, before Felipe awaked, and see the note first; but that risk she would take.

"Farewell, dear Felipe!" she whispered, under her breath, as she turned from the window.

The delay had cost her dear. The watchful Capitan, from his bed at the upper end of the court, had half heard, half scented something strange going on. As Ramona stepped out, he gave one short, quick bark, and came bounding down.

"Holy Virgin, I am lost!" thought Ramona; but, crouching on the ground, she quickly opened her net, and as Capitan came towards her, gave him a piece of meat, fondling and caressing him. While he ate it, wagging his tail, and making great demonstrations of joy, she picked up her load again, and still fondling him, said, "Come on, Capitan!" It was her last chance. If he barked again, somebody would be waked; if he went by her side quietly, she might escape. A cold sweat of terror burst on her forehead as she took her first step cautiously. The dog followed. She quickened her pace; he trotted along, still smelling the meat in the net. When she reached the willows, she halted, debating whether she should give him a large piece of meat, and try to run away while he was eating it, or whether she should let him go quietly along. She decided on the latter course; and, picking up her other net, walked on. She was safe now. She

turned, and looked back towards the house; all was dark and still. She could hardly see its outline. A great wave of emotion swept over her. It was the only home she had ever known. All she had experienced of happiness, as well as of bitter pain, had been there, — Felipe, Father Salvierderra, the servants, the birds, the garden, the dear chapel! Ah, if she could have once more prayed in the chapel! Who would put fresh flowers and ferns in the chapel now? How Felipe would miss her, when he knelt before the altar! For fourteen years she had knelt by his side. And the Señora, — the hard, cold Señora! She would alone be glad. Everybody else would be sorry. "They will all be sorry I have gone, — all but the Señora! I wish it had been so that I could have bidden them all good-by, and had them all bid me good-by, and wish us good fortune!" thought the gentle, loving girl, as she drew a long sigh, and, turning her back on her home, went forward in the path she had chosen.

She stooped and patted Capitan on the head. "Will you come with me, Capitan?" she said; and Capitan leaped up joyfully, giving two or three short, sharp notes of delight. "Good Capitan, come! They will not miss him out of so many," she thought, "and it will always seem like something from home, as long as I have Capitan."

When Alessandro first saw Ramona's figure dimly in the gloom, drawing slowly nearer, he did not rec-

ognize it, and he was full of apprehension at the sight. What stranger could it be, abroad in these lonely meadows at this hour of the night? Hastily he led the horses farther back into the copse, and hid himself behind a tree, to watch. In a few moments more he thought he recognized Capitan, bounding by the side of this bent and slow-moving figure. Yet this was surely an Indian woman toiling along under a heavy load. But what Indian woman would have so superb a colley as Capitan? Alessandro strained his eyes through the darkness. Presently he saw the figure halt, — drop part of its burden.

"Alessandro!" came in a sweet, low call.

He bounded like a deer, crying, "My Señorita! my Señorita! Can that be you? To think that you have brought these heavy loads!"

Ramona laughed. "Do you remember the day you showed me how the Indian women carried so much on their backs, in these nets? I did not think then I would use it so soon. But it hurts my forehead, Alessandro. It is n't the weight, but the strings cut. I could n't have carried them much farther!"

"Ah, you had no basket to cover the head," replied Alessandro, as he threw up the two nets on his shoulders as if they had been feathers. In doing so, he felt the violin-case.

"Is it the violin?" he cried. "My blessed one, where did you get it?"

"Off the table in Felipe's room," she answered. "I knew you would rather have it than anything else.

I brought very little, Alessandro; it seemed nothing while I was getting it; but it is very heavy to carry. Will it be too much for the poor tired horse? You and I can walk. And see, Alessandro, here is Capitan. He waked up, and I had to bring him, to keep him still. Can't he go with us?"

Capitan was leaping up, putting his paws on Alessandro's breast, licking his face, yelping, doing all a dog could do, to show welcome and affection.

Alessandro laughed aloud. Ramona had not more than two or three times heard him do this. It frightened her. "Why do you laugh, Alessandro?" she said.

"To think what I have to show you, my Señorita," he said. "Look here;" and turning towards the willows, he gave two or three low whistles, at the first note of which Baba came trotting out of the copse to the end of his lariat, and began to snort and whinny with delight as soon as he perceived Ramona.

Ramona burst into tears. The surprise was too great.

"Are you not glad, Señorita?" cried Alessandro, aghast. "Is it not your own horse? If you do not wish to take him, I will lead him back. My pony can carry you, if we journey very slowly. But I thought it would be joy to you to have Baba."

"Oh, it is! it is!" sobbed Ramona, with her head on Baba's neck. "It is a miracle, — a miracle. How did he come here? And the saddle too!" she cried, for the first time observing that. "Alessandro," in

an awe-struck whisper, "did the saints send him? Did you find him here?" It would have seemed to Ramona's faith no strange thing, had this been so.

"I think the saints helped me to bring him," answered Alessandro, seriously, "or else I had not done it so easily. I did but call, near the corral-fence, and he came to my hand, and leaped over the rails at my word, as quickly as Capitan might have done. He is yours, Señorita. It is no harm to take him?"

"Oh, no!" answered Ramona. "He is more mine than anything else I had; for it was Felipe gave him to me when he could but just stand on his legs; he was only two days old; and I have fed him out of my hand every day till now; and now he is five. Dear Baba, we will never be parted, never!" and she took his paw in both her hands, and laid her cheek against it lovingly.

Alessandro was busy, fastening the two nets on either side the saddle. "Baba will never know he has a load at all; they are not so heavy as my Señorita thought," he said. "It was the weight on the forehead, with nothing to keep the strings from the skin, which gave her pain."

Alessandro was making all haste. His hands trembled. "We must make all the speed we can, dearest Señorita," he said, "for a few hours. Then we will rest. Before light, we will be in a spot where we can hide safely all day. We will journey only by night, lest they pursue us."

"They will not," said Ramona. "There is no

danger. The Señora said she should do nothing. 'Nothing!'" she repeated, in a bitter tone. "That is what she made Felipe say, too. Felipe wanted to help us. He would have liked to have you stay with us; but all he could get was, that she would do 'nothing!' But they will not follow us. They will wish never to hear of me again. I mean, the Señora will wish never to hear of me. Felipe will be sorry. Felipe is very good, Alessandro."

They were all ready now, — Ramona on Baba, the two packed nets swinging from her saddle, one on either side. Alessandro, walking, led his tired pony. It was a sad sort of procession for one going to be wed, but Ramona's heart was full of joy.

"I don't know why it is, Alessandro," she said; "I should think I would be afraid, but I have not the least fear, — not the least; not of anything that can come, Alessandro," she reiterated with emphasis. "Is it not strange?"

"Yes, Señorita," he replied solemnly, laying his hand on hers as he walked close at her side. "It is strange. I am afraid, — afraid for you, my Señorita! But it is done, and we will not go back; and perhaps the saints will help you, and will let me take care of you. They must love you, Señorita; but they do not love me, nor my people."

"Are you never going to call me by my name?" asked Ramona. "I hate your calling me Señorita. That was what the Señora always called me when she was displeased."

"I will never speak the word again!" cried Alessandro. "The saints forbid I should speak to you in the words of that woman!"

"Can't you say Ramona?" she asked.

Alessandro hesitated. He could not have told why it seemed to him difficult to say Ramona.

"What was that other name, you said you always thought of me by?" she continued. "The Indian name, — the name of the dove?"

"Majel," he said. "It is by that name I have oftenest thought of you since the night I watched all night for you, after you had kissed me, and two wood-doves were calling and answering each other in the dark; and I said to myself, that is what my love is like, the wood-dove: the wood-dove's voice is low like hers, and sweeter than any other sound in the earth; and the wood-dove is true to one mate always —" He stopped.

"As I to you, Alessandro," said Ramona, leaning from her horse, and resting her hand on Alessandro's shoulder.

Baba stopped. He was used to knowing by the most trivial signs what his mistress wanted; he did not understand this new situation; no one had ever before, when Ramona was riding him, walked by his side so close that he touched his shoulders, and rested his hand in his mane. If it had been anybody else than Alessandro, Baba would not have permitted it even now. But it must be all right, since Ramona was quiet; and now she had stretched out her hand

and rested it on Alessandro's shoulder. Did that mean halt for a moment? Baba thought it might, and acted accordingly; turning his head round to the right, and looking back to see what came of it.

Alessandro's arms around Ramona, her head bent down to his, their lips together, — what could Baba think? As mischievously as if he had been a human being or an elf, Baba bounded to one side and tore the lovers apart. They both laughed, and cantered on, — Alessandro running; the poor Indian pony feeling the contagion, and loping as it had not done for many a day.

"Majel is my name, then," said Ramona, "is it? It is a sweet sound, but I would like it better Majella. Call me Majella."

"That will be good," replied Alessandro, "for the reason that never before had any one the same name. It will not be hard for me to say Majella. I know not why your name of Ramona has always been hard to my tongue."

"Because it was to be that you should call me Majella," said Ramona. "Remember, I am Ramona no longer. That also was the name the Señora called me by — and dear Felipe too," she added thoughtfully. "He would not know me by my new name. I would like to have *him* always call me Ramona. But for all the rest of the world I am Majella, now, — Alessandro's Majel!"

XVI

AFTER they reached the highway, and had trotted briskly on for a mile, Alessandro suddenly put out his hand, and taking Baba by the rein, began turning him round and round in the road.

"We will not go any farther in the road," he said, "but I must conceal our tracks here. We will go backwards for a few paces." The obedient Baba backed slowly, half dancing, as if he understood the trick; the Indian pony, too, curvetted awkwardly, then by a sudden bound under Alessandro's skilful guidance, leaped over a rock to the right, and stood waiting further orders. Baba followed, and Capitan; and there was no trail to show where they had left the road.

After trotting the pony round and round again in ever-widening circles, cantering off in one direction after another, then backing over the tracks for a few moments, Ramona docilely following, though much bewildered as to what it all meant, Alessandro said: "I think now they will never discover where we left the road. They will ride along, seeing our tracks plain, and then they will be so sure that we would have kept straight on, that they will not notice for a time; and when they do, they will never be able to see where the trail ended. And now my Majella has a very hard ride before her. Will she be afraid?"

"Afraid!" laughed Ramona. "Afraid, — on Baba, and with you!"

But it was indeed a hard ride. Alessandro had decided to hide for the day in a cañon he knew, from which a narrow trail led direct to Temecula, — a trail which was known to none but Indians. Once in this cañon, they would be safe from all possible pursuit. Alessandro did not in the least share Ramona's confidence that no effort would be made to overtake them. To his mind, it appeared certain that the Señora would never accept the situation without making an attempt to recover at least the horse and the dog. "She can say, if she chooses, that I have stolen one of her horses," he thought to himself bitterly; "and everybody would believe her. Nobody would believe us, if we said it was the Señorita's own horse."

The head of the cañon was only a couple of miles from the road; but it was in a nearly impenetrable thicket of chaparral, where young oaks had grown up so high that their tops made, as it were, a second stratum of thicket. Alessandro had never ridden through it; he had come up on foot once from the other side, and, forcing his way through the tangle, had found, to his surprise, that he was near the highway. It was from this cañon that he had brought the ferns which it had so delighted Ramona to arrange for the decoration of the chapel. The place was filled with them, growing almost in tropical luxuriance; but this was a mile or so farther down, and to reach that spot from above, Alessandro had had to let himself down a sheer wall of stone. The cañon at its head was little more than a rift in the rocks, and the stream which had its rise in it was only a trickling spring at the beginning. It was this precious water, as well as the inaccessibility of the spot, which had decided Alessandro to gain the place at all hazards and costs. But a wall of granite would not have seemed a much more insuperable obstacle than did this wall of chaparral, along which they rode, vainly searching for a break in it. It appeared to Alessandro to have thickened and knit even since the last spring. At last they made their way down a small side cañon, — a sort of wing to the main cañon; a very few rods down this, and they were as hidden from view from above as if the earth had swallowed them. The first red tints of the dawn were coming.

From the eastern horizon to the zenith, the whole sky was like a dappled crimson fleece.

"Oh, what a lovely place!" exclaimed Ramona. "I am sure this was not a hard ride at all, Alessandro! Is this where we are to stay?"

Alessandro turned a compassionate look upon her. "How little does the wood-dove know of rough places!" he said. "This is only the beginning; hardly is it even the beginning."

Fastening his pony to a bush, he reconnoitred the place, disappearing from sight the moment he entered the chaparral in any direction. Returning at last, with a grave face, he said, "Will Majella let me leave her here for a little time? There is a way, but I can find it only on foot. I will not be gone long. I know it is near."

Tears came into Ramona's eyes. The only thing she dreaded was the losing sight of Alessandro. He gazed at her anxiously. "I must go, Majella," he said with emphasis. "We are in danger here."

"Go! go! Alessandro," she cried. "But, oh, do not be long!"

As he disappeared in the thicket, the tough boughs crackling and snapping before him, it seemed to Ramona that she was again alone in the world. Capitan, too, bounded after Alessandro, and did not return at her call. All was still. Ramona laid her head on Baba's neck. The moments seemed hours. At last, just as the yellow light streamed across the sky, and the crimson fleeces turned in one second to

gold, she heard Alessandro's steps, the next moment saw his face. It was aglow with joy.

"I have found the trail!" he exclaimed; "but we must climb up again out of this; and it is too light. I like it not."

With fear and trembling they urged their horses up and out into the open again, and galloped a half-mile farther west, still keeping as close to the chaparral thicket as possible. Here Alessandro, who led the way, suddenly turned into the very thicket itself; no apparent opening; but the boughs parted and closed, and his head appeared above them; still the little pony was trotting bravely along. Baba snorted with displeasure as he plunged into the same bristling pathway. The thick-set, thorny branches smote Ramona's cheeks. What was worse, they caught the nets swung on Baba's sides; presently these were held fast, and Baba began to rear and kick. Here was a real difficulty. Alessandro dismounted, cut the strings, and put both the packages securely on the back of his own pony. "I will walk," he said. "It was only a little way longer I would have ridden. I shall lead Baba, where it is narrow."

"Narrow," indeed. It was from sheer terror, soon, that Ramona shut her eyes. A path, it seemed to her only a hand's-breadth wide, — a stony, crumbling path, — on the side of a precipice, down which the stones rolled, and rolled, and rolled, echoing, far out of sight, as they passed; at each step the beasts took, the stones rolled and fell. Only the yucca-plants,

with their sharp bayonet-leaves, had made shift to keep foothold on this precipice. Of these there were thousands; and their tall flower-stalks, fifteen, twenty feet high, set thick with the shining, smooth seed-cups, glistened like satin chalices in the sun. Below — hundreds of feet below — lay the cañon bottom, a solid bed of chaparral, looking soft and even as a bed of moss. Giant sycamore-trees lifted their heads, at intervals, above this; and far out in the plain glistened the loops of the river, whose sources, unknown to the world, seen of but few human eyes, were to be waters of comfort to these fugitives this day.

Alessandro was cheered. The trail was child's play to him. At the first tread of Baba's dainty steps on the rolling stones, he saw that the horse was as sure-footed as an Indian pony. In a few short hours, now, they would be all at rest. He knew where, under a sycamore-clump, there was running water, clear as crystal, and cold, — almost colder than one could drink, — and green grass too; plenty for two days' feed for the horses, or even three; and all California might be searched over in vain for them, once they were down this trail. His heart full of joy at these thoughts, he turned, to see Ramona pallid, her lips parted, her eyes full of terror. He had forgotten that her riding had hitherto been only on the smooth ways of the valley and the plain. There she was so fearless, that he had had no misgiving about her nerves here; but she had dropped

the reins, was clutching Baba's mane with both hands, and sitting unsteadily in her saddle. She had been too proud to cry out; but she was nearly beside herself with fright. Alessandro halted so suddenly that Baba, whose nose was nearly on his shoulder, came to so sharp a stop that Ramona uttered a cry. She thought he had lost his footing.

Alessandro looked at her in dismay. To dismount on that perilous trail was impossible; moreover, to walk there would take more nerve than to ride. Yet she looked as if she could not much longer keep her seat.

"Carita," he cried, "I was stupid not to have told you how narrow the way is; but it is safe. I can run in it. I ran all this way with the ferns on my back I brought for you."

"Oh, did you?" gasped Ramona, diverted, for the moment, from her contemplation of the abyss, and more reassured by that change of her thoughts than she could have been by anything else. "Did you? It is frightful, Alessandro. I never heard of such a trail. I feel as if I were on a rope in the air. If I could get down and go on my hands and knees, I think I would like it better. Could I?"

"I would not dare to have you get off, just here, Majella," answered Alessandro, sorrowfully. "It is dreadful to me to see you suffer so; I will go very slowly. Indeed, it is safe; we all came up here, the whole band, for the sheep-shearing, — old Fernando on his horse all the way."

"Really," said Ramona, taking comfort at each word, "I will try not to be so silly. Is it far, dearest Alessandro?"

"Not much more as steep as this, dear, nor so narrow; but it will be an hour yet before we stop."

But the worst was over for Ramona now, and long before they reached the bottom of the precipice she was ready to laugh at her fears; only, as she looked back at the zigzag lines of the path over which she had come,—little more than a brown thread, they seemed, flung along the rock,—she shuddered.

Down in the bottom of the cañon it was still the dusky gloaming when they arrived. Day came late to this fairy spot. Only at high noon did the sun fairly shine in. As Ramona looked around her, she uttered an exclamation of delight, which satisfied Alessandro. "Yes," he said, "when I came here for the ferns, I wished to myself many times that you could see it. There is not in all this country so beautiful a place. This is our first home, my Majella," he added, in a tone almost solemn; and throwing his arms around her, he drew her to his breast, with the first feeling of joy he had experienced.

"I wish we could live here always," cried Ramona.

"Would Majella be content?" said Alessandro.

"Very," she answered.

He sighed. "There would not be land enough, to live here," he said. "If there were, I too would like to stay here till I died, Majella, and never see the

face of a white man again!" Already the instinct of the hunted and wounded animal to seek hiding, was striving in Alessandro's blood. "But there would be no food. We could not live here." Ramona's exclamation had set Alessandro to thinking, however. "Would Majella be content to stay here three days now?" he asked. "There is grass enough for the horses for that time. We should be very safe here; and I fear very much we should not be safe on any road. I think, Majella, the Señora will send men after Baba."

"Baba!" cried Ramona, aghast at the idea. "My own horse! She would not dare to call it stealing a horse, to take my own Baba!" But even as she spoke, her heart misgave her. The Señora would dare anything; would misrepresent anything; only too well Ramona knew what the very mention of the phrase "horse-stealing" meant all through the country. She looked piteously at Alessandro. He read her thoughts.

"Yes, that is it, Majella," he said. "If she sent men after Baba, there is no knowing what they might do. It would not do any good for you to say he was yours. They would not believe you; and they might take me too, if the Señora had told them to, and put me into Ventura jail."

"She's just wicked enough to do it!" cried Ramona. "Let us not stir out of this spot, Alessandro, — not for a week! Could n't we stay a week? By that time she would have given over looking for us."

"I am afraid not a week. There is not feed for the horses; and I do not know what we could eat. I have my gun, but there is not much, now, to kill."

"But I have brought meat and bread, Alessandro," said Ramona, earnestly, "and we could eat very little each day, and make it last!" She was like a child, in her simplicity and eagerness. Every other thought was for the time being driven out of her mind by the terror of being pursued. Pursuit of her, she knew, would not be in the Señora's plan; but the reclaiming of Baba and Capitan, that was another thing. The more Ramona thought of it, the more it seemed to her a form of vengeance which would be likely to commend itself to the Señora's mind. Felipe might possibly prevent it. It was he who had given Baba to her. He would feel that it would be shameful to recall or deny the gift. Only in Felipe lay Ramona's hope.

If she had thought to tell Alessandro that in her farewell note to Felipe she had said that she supposed they were going to Father Salvierderra, it would have saved both her and Alessandro much disquietude. Alessandro would have known that men pursuing them, on that supposition, would have gone straight down the river road to the sea, and struck northward along the coast. But it did not occur to Ramona to mention this; in fact, she hardly recollected it after the first day. Alessandro had explained to her his plan, which was to go by way

of Temecula to San Diego, to be married there by Father Gaspara, the priest of that parish, and then go to the village or pueblo of San Pasquale, about fifteen miles northwest of San Diego. A cousin of Alessandro's was the head man of this village, and had many times begged him to come there to live; but Alessandro had steadily refused, believing it to be his duty to remain at Temecula with his father. San Pasquale was a regularly established pueblo, founded by a number of the Indian neophytes of the San Luis Rey Mission at the time of the breaking up of that Mission. It was established by a decree of the Governor of California, and the lands of the San Pasquale Valley given to it. A paper recording this establishment and gift, signed by the Governor's own hand, was given to the Indian who was the first Alcalde of the pueblo. He was Chief Pablo's brother. At his death the authority passed into the hands of his son, Ysidro, the cousin of whom Alessandro had spoken.

"Ysidro has that paper still," Alessandro said, "and he thinks it will keep them their village. Perhaps it will; but the Americans are beginning to come in at the head of the valley, and I do not believe, Majella, there is any safety anywhere. Still, for a few years we can perhaps stay there. There are nearly two hundred Indians in the valley; it is much better than Temecula, and Ysidro's people are much better off than ours were. They have splendid herds of cattle and horses, and large wheat-

fields. Ysidro's house stands under a great fig-tree; they say it is the largest fig-tree in the country."

"But, Alessandro," cried Ramona, "why do you think it is not safe there, if Ysidro has the paper? I thought a paper made it all right."

"I don't know," replied Alessandro. "Perhaps it may be; but I have got the feeling now that nothing will be of any use against the Americans. I don't believe they will mind the paper."

"They did n't mind the papers the Señora had for all that land of hers they took away," said Ramona, thoughtfully. "But Felipe said that was because Pio Pico was a bad man, and gave away lands he had no right to give away."

"That 's just it," said Alessandro. "Can't they say that same thing about any governor, especially if he has given lands to us? If the Señora could n't keep hers, with Señor Felipe to help her, and he knows all about the law, and can speak the American language, what chance is there for us? We can't take care of ourselves any better than the wild beasts can, my Majella. Oh, why, why did you come with me? Why did I let you?"

After such words as these, Alessandro would throw himself on the ground, and for a few moments not even Ramona's voice would make him look up. It was strange that the gentle girl, unused to hardship, or to the thought of danger, did not find herself terrified by these fierce glooms and apprehensions of her lover. But she was appalled by nothing. Saved

from the only thing in life she had dreaded, sure that Alessandro lived, and that he would not leave her, she had no fears. This was partly from her inexperience, from her utter inability to conceive of the things Alessandro's imagination painted in colors only too true; but it was also largely due to the inalienable loyalty and quenchless courage of her soul, — qualities in her nature never yet tested; qualities of which she hardly knew so much as the name, but which were to bear her steadfast and buoyant through many sorrowful years.

Before nightfall of this their first day in the wilderness, Alessandro had prepared for Ramona a bed of finely broken twigs of the manzanita and ceanothus, both of which grew in abundance all through the cañon. Above these he spread layers of glossy ferns, five and six feet long; when it was done, it was a couch no queen need have scorned. As Ramona seated herself on it, she exclaimed: "Now I shall see how it feels to lie and look up at the stars at night! Do you recollect, Alessandro, the night you put Felipe's bed on the veranda, when you told me how beautiful it was to lie at night out of doors and look up at the stars?"

Indeed did Alessandro remember that night, — the first moment he had ever dared to dream of the Señorita Ramona as his own. "Yes, I remember it, my Majella," he answered slowly; and in a moment more added, "That was the day Juan Can had told me that your mother was of my people;

and that was the night I first dared in my thoughts to say that perhaps you might some day love me."

"But where are you going to sleep, Alessandro?" said Ramona, seeing that he spread no more boughs. "You have made yourself no bed."

Alessandro laughed. "I need no bed," he said. "We think it is on our mother's lap we lie, when we lie on the ground. It is not hard, Majella. It is soft, and rests one better than beds. But to-night I shall not sleep. I will sit by this tree and watch."

"Why, what are you afraid of?" asked Ramona.

"It may grow so cold that I must make a fire for Majella," he answered. "It sometimes gets very cold before morning in these cañons; so I shall feel safer to watch to-night."

This he said, not to alarm Ramona. His real reason for watching was, that he had seen on the edge of the stream tracks which gave him uneasiness. They were faint and evidently old; but they looked like the tracks of a mountain lion. As soon as it was dark enough to prevent the curl of smoke from being seen from below, he would light a fire, and keep it blazing all night, and watch, gun in hand, lest the beast return.

"But you will be dead, Alessandro, if you do not sleep. You are not strong," said Ramona, anxiously.

"I am strong now, Majella," answered Alessandro. And indeed he did already look like a renewed man, spite of all his fatigue and anxiety. "I am no

longer weak; and to-morrow I will sleep, and you shall watch."

"Will you lie on the fern-bed then?" asked Ramona, gleefully.

"I would like the ground better," said honest Alessandro.

Ramona looked disappointed. "That is very strange," she said. "It is not so soft, this bed of boughs, that one need fear to be made tender by lying on it," she continued, throwing herself down; "but oh, how sweet, how sweet it smells!"

"Yes, there is spice-wood in it," he answered. "I put it in at the head, for Majella's pillow."

Ramona was very tired, and she was happy. All night long she slept like a child. She did not hear Alessandro's steps. She did not hear the crackling of the fire he lighted. She did not hear the barking of Capitan, who more than once, spite of all Alessandro could do to quiet him, made the cañon echo with sharp, quick notes of warning, as he heard the stealthy steps of wild creatures in the chaparral. Hour after hour she slept on. And hour after hour Alessandro sat leaning against a huge sycamore-trunk, and watched her. As the fitful firelight played over her face, he thought he had never seen it so beautiful. Its expression of calm repose insensibly soothed and strengthened him. She looked like a saint, he thought; perhaps it was as a saint of help and guidance, the Virgin was sending her to him and his people. The dark-

ness deepened, became blackness; only the red gleams from the fire broke it, in swaying rifts, as the wind makes rifts in black storm-clouds in the heavens. With the darkness, the stillness also deepened. Nothing broke that, except an occasional motion of Baba or the pony, or an alert signal from Capitan; then all seemed stiller than ever. Alessandro felt as if God himself were in the cañon. Countless times in his life before he had lain in lonely places under the sky and watched the night through, but he never felt like this. It was ecstasy, and yet it was pain. What was to come on the morrow, and the next morrow, and the next, and the next, all through the coming years? What was to come to this beloved and loving woman who lay there sleeping, so confident, so trustful, guarded only by him, — by him, Alessandro, the exile, fugitive, homeless man?

Before the dawn, wood-doves began their calling. The cañon was full of them, no two notes quite alike, it seemed to Alessandro's sharpened sense; pair after pair, he fancied that he recognized, speaking and replying, as did the pair whose voices had so comforted him the night he watched under the geranium hedge by the Moreno chapel, — "Love?" "Here!" "Love?" "Here!" They comforted him still more now. "They too have only each other," he thought, as he bent his eyes lovingly on Ramona's face.

It was dawn, and past dawn, on the plains, before it was yet morning twilight in the cañon; but the

birds in the upper boughs of the sycamores caught the tokens of the coming day, and began to twitter in the dusk. Their notes fell on Ramona's sleeping ear, like the familiar sound of the linnets in the veranda-thatch at home, and waked her instantly. Sitting up bewildered, and looking about her, she exclaimed, "Oh, is it morning already, and so dark? The birds can see more sky than we! Sing, Alessandro," and she began the hymn: —

> "'Singers at dawn
> From the heavens above
> People all regions;
> Gladly we too sing.'"

Never went up truer invocation, from sweeter spot.

"Sing not so loud, my Majel," whispered Alessandro, as her voice went carolling like a lark's in the pure ether. "There might be hunters near who would hear;" and he joined in with low and muffled tones.

As she dropped her voice at this caution, it seemed even sweeter than before: —

> "'Come, O sinners,
> Come, and we will sing
> Tender hymns
> To our refuge.'"

"Ah, Majella, there is no sinner here, except me!" said Alessandro. "My Majella is like one of the Virgin's own saints." And indeed he might have been forgiven the thought, as he gazed at Ramona, sitting there in the shimmering light, her face thrown

out into relief by the gray wall of fern-draped rock behind her; her splendid hair, unbound, falling in tangled masses to her waist; her cheeks flushed, her face radiant with devout and fervent supplication, her eyes uplifted to the narrow belt of sky overhead, where filmy vapors were turning to gold, touched by a sun she could not see.

"Hush, my love," she breathed rather than said. "That would be a sin, if you really thought it.

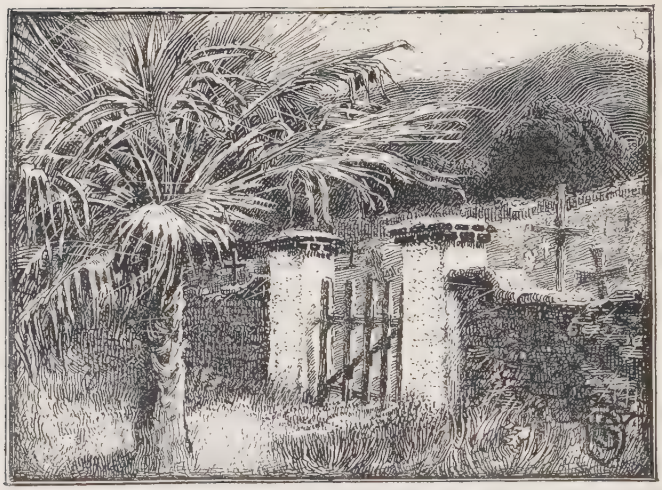
'O beautiful Queen,
Princess of Heaven,'"

she continued, repeating the first lines of the song; and then, sinking on her knees, reached out one hand for Alessandro's, and glided, almost without a break in the melodious sound, into a low recitative of the morning prayers. Her rosary was of fine-chased gold beads, with an ivory crucifix; a rare and precious relic of the Missions' olden times. It had belonged to Father Peyri himself, was given by him to Father Salvierderra, and by Father Salvierderra to the "blessed child," Ramona, at her confirmation. A warmer token of his love and trust he could not have bestowed upon her, and to Ramona's religious and affectionate heart it had always seemed a bond and an assurance, not only of Father Salvierderra's love, but of the love and protection of the now sainted Peyri.

As she pronounced the last words of her trusting prayer, and slipped the last of the golden beads along on its string, a thread of sunlight shot into the

cañon through a deep narrow gap in its rocky eastern crest, — shot in for a second, no more; fell aslant the rosary, lighted it; by a flash as if of fire, across the fine-cut facets of the beads, on Ramona's hands, and on the white face of the ivory Christ. Only a flash, and it was gone! To both Ramona and Alessandro it came like an omen, — like a message straight from the Virgin. Could she choose better messenger, — she, the compassionate one, the loving woman in heaven; mother of the Christ to whom they prayed, through her, — mother, for whose sake He would regard their least cry, — could she choose better messenger, or swifter, than the sunbeam, to say that she heard and would help them in these sore straits?

Perhaps there were not, in the whole great world, at that moment to be found, two souls who were experiencing so vivid a happiness as thrilled the veins of these two friendless ones, on their knees, alone in the wilderness, gazing half awe-stricken at the shining rosary.



XVII

BEFORE the end of their second day in the cañon, the place had become to Ramona so like a friendly home, that she dreaded to leave its shelter. Nothing is stronger proof of the original intent of Nature to do more for man than civilization in its arrogance will long permit her to do, than the quick and sure way in which she reclaims his affection, when by weariness, idle chance, or disaster, he is returned, for an interval, to her arms. How soon he rejects the miserable subterfuges of what he had called habits; sheds the still more miserable pretences of superiority, makeshifts of adornment, and chains of custom! "Whom the gods love, die

young," has been too long carelessly said. It is not true, in the sense in which men use the words. Whom the gods love, dwell with nature; if they are ever lured away, return to her before they are old. Then, however long they live before they die, they die young. Whom the gods love, live young — forever.

With the insight of a lover added to the instinct of the Indian, Alessandro saw how, hour by hour, there grew in Ramona's eyes the wonted look of one at home; how she watched the shadows, and knew what they meant.

"If we lived here, the walls would be sun-dials for us, would they not?" she said, in a tone of pleasure. "I see that yon tall yucca has gone in shadow sooner than it did yesterday."

And, "What millions of things grow here, Alessandro! I did not know there were so many. Have they all names? The nuns taught us some names; but they were hard, and I forgot them. We might name them for ourselves, if we lived here. They would be our relations."

And, "For one year I should lie and look up at the sky, my Alessandro, and do nothing else. It hardly seems as if it would be a sin to do nothing for a year, if one gazed steadily at the sky all the while."

And, "Now I know what it is I have always seen in your face, Alessandro. It is the look from the sky. One must be always serious and not unhappy,

but never too glad, I think, when he lives with nothing between him and the sky, and the saints can see him every minute."

And, "I cannot believe that it is but two days I have lived in the air, Alessandro. This seems to me the first home I have ever had. Is it because I am Indian, Alessandro, that it gives me such joy?"

It was strange how many more words Ramona spoke than Alessandro, yet how full she felt their intercourse to be. His silence was more than silent; it was taciturn. Yet she always felt herself answered. A monosyllable of Alessandro's, nay, a look, told what other men took long sentences to say, and said less eloquently.

After long thinking over this, she exclaimed, "You speak as the trees speak, and like the rock yonder, and the flowers, without saying anything!"

This delighted Alessandro's very heart. "And you, Majella," he exclaimed; "when you say that, you speak in the language of our people; you are as we are."

And Ramona, in her turn, was made happy by his words, — happier than she would have been made by any other praise or fondness.

Alessandro found himself regaining all his strength as if by a miracle. The gaunt look had left his face. Almost it seemed that its contour was already fuller. There is a beautiful old Gaelic legend of a Fairy who wooed a Prince, came again and again to him, and, herself invisible to all but the Prince, hovered in the

air, sang loving songs to draw him away from the crowd of his indignant nobles, who heard her voice and summoned magicians to rout her by all spells and enchantments at their command. Finally they succeeded in silencing her and driving her off; but as she vanished from the Prince's sight she threw him an apple, — a magic golden apple. Once having tasted of this, he refused all other food. Day after day, night after night, he ate only this golden apple; and yet, morning after morning, evening after evening, there lay the golden fruit, still whole and shining, as if he had not fed upon it; and when the Fairy came the next time, the Prince leaped into her magic boat, sailed away with her, and never was seen in his kingdom again. It was only an allegory, this legend, — a beautiful allegory, and true, — of love and lovers. The food on which Alessandro was, hour by hour, now growing strong, was as magic and invisible as Prince Connla's apple, and just as strength-giving.

"My Alessandro, how is it you look so well, so soon?" said Ramona, studying his countenance with loving care. "I thought that night you would die. Now you look nearly strong as ever; your eyes shine, and your hand is not hot! It is the blessed air; it has cured you, as it cured Felipe of the fever."

"If the air could keep me well, I had not been ill, Majella," replied Alessandro. "I had been under no roof except the tule-shed, till I saw you. It is

not the air;" and he looked at her with a gaze that said the rest.

At twilight of the third day, when Ramona saw Alessandro leading up Baba, saddled ready for the journey, the tears filled her eyes. At noon Alessandro had said to her: "To-night, Majella, we must go. There is not grass enough for another day. We must go while the horses are strong. I dare not lead them any farther down the cañon to graze, for there is a ranch only a few miles lower. To-day I found one of the man's cows feeding near Baba."

Ramona made no remonstrance. The necessity was too evident; but the look on her face gave Alessandro a new pang. He, too, felt as if exiled afresh in leaving the spot. And now, as he led the horses slowly up, and saw Ramona sitting in a dejected attitude beside the nets, in which were again carefully packed their small stores, his heart ached anew. Again the sense of his homeless and destitute condition settled like an unbearable burden on his soul. Whither and to what was he leading his Majella?

But once in the saddle, Ramona recovered cheerfulness. Baba was in such gay heart, she could not be wholly sad. The horse seemed fairly rollicking with satisfaction at being once more on the move. Capitan, too, was gay. He had found the cañon dull, spite of its refreshing shade and cool water. He longed for sheep. He did not understand this inactivity. The puzzled look on his face had made Ramona laugh more than once, as he would come

and stand before her, wagging his tail and fixing his eyes intently on her face, as if he said in so many words, "What in the world are you about in this cañon, and do not you ever intend to return home? Or if you will stay here, why not keep sheep? Do you not see that I have nothing to do?"

"We must ride all night, Majella," said Alessandro, "and lose no time. It is a long way to the place where we shall stay to-morrow."

"Is it a cañon?" asked Ramona, hopefully.

"No," he replied, "not a cañon; but there are beautiful oak-trees. It is where we get our acorns for the winter. It is on the top of a high hill."

"Will it be safe there?" she asked.

"I think so," he replied; "though not so safe as here. There is no such place as this in all the country."

"And then where shall we go next?" she asked.

"That is very near Temecula," he said. "We must go into Temecula, dear Majella. I must go to Mr. Hartsel's. He is friendly. He will give me money for my father's violin. If it were not for that, I would never go near the place again."

"I would like to see it, Alessandro," she said gently.

"Oh, no, no, Majella!" he cried; "you would not. It is terrible; the houses all unroofed, — all but my father's and José's. They were shingled roofs; they will be just the same; all the rest are only walls. Antonio's mother threw hers down; I don't know

how the old woman ever had the strength; they said she was like a fury. She said nobody should ever live in those walls again; and she took a pole, and made a great hole in one side, and then she ran Antonio's wagon against it with all her might, till it fell in. No, Majella. It will be dreadful."

"Would n't you like to go into the graveyard again, Alessandro?" she said timidly.

"The saints forbid!" he said solemnly. "I think it would make me a murderer to stand in that graveyard! If I had not you, my Majel, I should kill some white man when I came out. Oh, do not speak of it!" he added; after a moment's silence; "it takes the strength all out of my blood again, Majella. It feels as if I should die!"

And the word "Temecula" was not mentioned between them again until dusk the next day, when, as they were riding slowly along between low, wooded hills, they suddenly came to an opening, a green, marshy place, with a little thread of trickling water, at which their horses stopped, and drank thirstily; and Ramona, looking ahead, saw lights twinkling in the distance. "Lights, Alessandro, lights!" she exclaimed, pointing to them.

"Yes, Majella," he replied, "it is Temecula;" and springing off his pony he came to her side, and putting both his hands on hers, said: "I have been thinking, for a long way back, Carita, what is to be done here. I do not know. What does Majella think will be wise? If men have been sent out to

pursue us, they may be at Hartsel's. His store is the place where everybody stops, everybody goes. I dare not have you go there, Majella; yet I must go. The only way I can get any money is from Mr. Hartsel."

"I must wait somewhere while you go!" said Ramona, her heart beating as she gazed ahead into the blackness of the great plain. It looked vast as the sea. "That is the only safe thing, Alessandro."

"I think so too," he said; "but, oh, I am afraid for you; and will not you be afraid?"

"Yes," she replied, "I am afraid. But it is not so dangerous as the other."

"If anything were to happen to me, and I could not come back to you, Majella, if you give Baba his reins he will take you safe home, — he and Capitan."

Ramona shrieked aloud. She had not thought of this possibility. Alessandro had thought of everything. "What could happen?" she cried.

"I mean if the men were there, and if they took me for stealing the horse," he said.

"But you would not have the horse with you," she said. "How could they take you?"

"That might n't make any difference," replied Alessandro. "They might take me, to make me tell where the horse was."

"Oh, Alessandro," sobbed Ramona, "what shall we do!" Then in another second, gathering her courage, she exclaimed, "Alessandro, I know what

I will do. I will stay in the graveyard. No one will come there. Shall I not be safest there?"

"Holy Virgin! would my Majel stay there?" exclaimed Alessandro.

"Why not?" she said. "It is not the dead that will harm us. They would all help us if they could. I have no fear. I will wait there while you go; and if you do not come in an hour, I will come to Mr. Hartsel's after you. If there are men of the Señora's there, they will know me; they will not dare to touch me. They will know that Felipe would punish them. I will not be afraid. And if they are ordered to take Baba, they can have him; we can walk when the pony is tired."

Her confidence was contagious. "My wood-dove has in her breast the heart of the lion," said Alessandro, fondly. "We will do as she says. She is wise;" and he turned their horses' heads in the direction of the graveyard. It was surrounded by a low adobe wall, with one small gate of wooden paling. As they reached it, Alessandro exclaimed, "The thieves have taken the gate!"

"What could they have wanted with that?" said Ramona.

"To burn," he said doggedly. "It was wood; but it was very little. They might have left the graves safe from wild beasts and cattle!"

As they entered the enclosure, a dark figure rose from one of the graves. Ramona started.

"Fear nothing," whispered Alessandro. "It must

be one of our people. I am glad; now you will not be alone. It is Carmena, I am sure. That was the corner where they buried José. I will speak to her;" and leaving Ramona at the gate, he went slowly on, saying in a low voice, in the Luiseno language, "Carmena, is that you? Have no fear. It is I, Alessandro!"

It was Carmena. The poor creature, nearly crazed with grief, was spending her days by her baby's grave in Pachanga, and her nights by her husband's in Temecula. She dared not come to Temecula by day, for the Americans were there, and she feared them. After a short talk with her, Alessandro returned, leading her along. Bringing her to Ramona's side, he laid her feverish hand in Ramona's, and said: "Majella, I have told her all. She cannot speak a word of Spanish, but she is very glad, she says, that you have come with me, and she will stay close by your side till I come back."

Ramona's tender heart ached with desire to comfort the girl; but all she could do was to press her hand in silence. Even in the darkness she could see the hollow, mournful eyes and the wasted cheek. Words are less needful to sorrow than to joy. Carmena felt in every fibre how Ramona was pitying her. Presently she made a gentle motion, as if to draw her from the saddle. Ramona bent down and looked inquiringly into her face. Again she drew her gently with one hand, and with the other pointed to the corner from which she had come. Ramona

understood. "She wants to show me her husband's grave," she thought. "She does not like to be away from it. I will go with her."

Dismounting, and taking Baba's bridle over her arm, she bowed her head assentingly, and still keeping firm hold of Carmena's hand, followed her. The graves were thick, and irregularly placed, each mound marked by a small wooden cross. Carmena led with the swift step of one who knew each inch of the way by heart. More than once Ramona stumbled and nearly fell, and Baba was impatient and restive at the strange inequalities under his feet. When they reached the corner, Ramona saw the fresh-piled earth of the new grave. Uttering a wailing cry, Carmena, drawing Ramona to the edge of it, pointed down with her right hand, then laid both hands on her heart, and gazed at Ramona piteously. Ramona burst into weeping, and again clasping Carmena's hand, laid it on her own breast, to show her sympathy. Carmena did not weep. She was long past that; and she felt for the moment lifted out of herself by the sweet, sudden sympathy of this stranger, — this girl like herself, yet so different, so wonderful, so beautiful, Carmena was sure she must be. Had the saints sent her from heaven to Alessandro? What did it mean? Carmena's bosom was heaving with the things she longed to say and to ask; but all she could do was to press Ramona's hand again and again, and occasionally lay her soft cheek upon it.

"Now, was it not the saints that put it into my head to come to the graveyard?" thought Ramona. "What a comfort to this poor heart-broken thing to see Alessandro! And she keeps me from all fear. Holy Virgin! but I had died of terror here all alone. Not that the dead would harm me; but simply from the vast, silent plain, and the gloom."

Soon Carmena made signs to Ramona that they would return to the gate. Considerate and thoughtful, she remembered that Alessandro would expect to find them there. But it was a long and weary watch they had, waiting for Alessandro to come.

After leaving them, and tethering his pony, he had struck off at a quick run for Hartsel's, which was perhaps an eighth of a mile from the graveyard. His own old home lay a little to the right. As he drew near, he saw a light in its windows. He stopped as if shot. "A light in our house!" he exclaimed; and he clenched his hands. "Those cursed robbers have gone into it to live already!" His blood seemed turning to fire. Ramona would not have recognized the face of her Alessandro now. It was full of implacable vengeance. Involuntarily he felt for his knife. It was gone. His gun he had left inside the graveyard, leaning against the wall. Ah! in the graveyard! Yes, and there also was Ramona waiting for him. Thoughts of vengeance fled. The world held now but one work, one hope, one passion, for him. But he would at least see who were these dwellers in his father's house. A fierce desire to see

their faces burned within him. Why should he thus torture himself? Why, indeed? But he must. He would see the new home-life already begun on the grave of his. Stealthily creeping under the window from which the light shone, he listened. He heard children's voices; a woman's voice; at intervals the voice of a man, gruff and surly; various household sounds also. It was evidently the supper-hour. Cautiously raising himself till his eyes were on a level with the lowest panes in the window, he looked in.

A table was set in the middle of the floor, and there were sitting at it a man, woman, and two children. The youngest, little more than a baby, sat in its high chair, drumming with a spoon on the table, impatient for its supper. The room was in great confusion, — beds made on the floor, open boxes half unpacked, saddles and harness thrown down in corners; evidently there were new-comers into the house. The window was open by an inch. It had warped, and would not shut down. Bitterly Alessandro recollected how he had put off from day to day the planing of that window to make it shut tight. Now, thanks to that crack, he could hear all that was said. The woman looked weary and worn. Her face was a sensitive one, and her voice kindly; but the man had the countenance of a brute, — of a human brute. Why do we malign the so-called brute creation, making their names a unit of comparison for base traits which never one of them possessed?

"It seems as if I never should get to rights in this world!" said the woman. Alessandro understood enough English to gather the meaning of what she said. He listened eagerly. "When will the next wagon get here?"

"I don't know," growled her husband. "There 's been a slide in that cursed cañon, and blocked the road. They won't be here for several days yet. Hain't you got stuff enough round now? If you 'd clear up what 's here now, then 'twould be time enough to grumble because you had n't got everything."

"But, John," she replied, "I can't clear up till the bureau comes, to put the things away in, and the bedsteads. I can't seem to do anything."

"You can grumble, I take notice," he answered. "That 's about all you women are good for, anyhow. There was a first-rate raw-hide bedstead in here. If Rothsaker had n't been such a fool 's to let those dogs of Indians carry off all their truck, we might have had that!"

The woman looked at him reproachfully, but did not speak for a moment. Then her cheeks flushed, and seeming unable to repress the speech, she exclaimed, "Well, I 'm thankful enough he did let the poor things take their furniture. I 'd never have slept a wink on that bedstead, I know, if it had ha' been left here. It 's bad enough to take their houses this way!"

"Oh, you shut up your head for a blamed fool,

will you!" cried the man. He was half drunk, his worst and most dangerous state. She glanced at him half timorously, half indignantly, and turning to the children, began feeding the baby. At that second the other child looked up, and catching sight of the outline of Alessandro's head, cried out, "There 's a man there! There, at the window!"

Alessandro threw himself flat on the ground, and held his breath. Had he imperilled all, brought danger on himself and Ramona, by yielding to this mad impulse to look once more inside the walls of his home? With a fearful oath, the half-drunken man exclaimed, "One of those damned Indians, I expect. I've seen several hangin' round to-day. We'll have to shoot two or three of 'em yet, before we're rid of 'em!" and he took his gun down from the pegs above the fireplace, and went to the door with it in his hand.

"Oh, don't fire, father, don't!" cried the woman. "They 'll come and murder us all in our sleep if you do! Don't fire!" and she pulled him back by the sleeve.

Shaking her off, with another oath, he stepped across the threshold, and stood listening, and peering into the darkness. Alessandro's heart beat like a hammer in his breast. Except for the thought of Ramona, he would have sprung on the man, seized his gun, and killed him.

"I don't believe it was anybody, after all, father," persisted the woman. "Bud 's always seein' things.

I don't believe there was anybody there. Come in; supper 's gettin' all cold."

"Well, I 'll jest fire, to let 'em know there 's powder 'n' shot round here," said the fiend. "If it hits any on 'em roamin' round, he won't know what hurt him;" and levelling his gun at random, with his drunken, unsteady hand he fired. The bullet whistled away harmlessly into the empty darkness. Hearkening a few moments, and hearing no cry, he hiccupped, "Mi-i-issed him that time," and went in to his supper.

Alessandro did not dare to stir for a long time. How he cursed his own folly in having brought himself into this plight! What needless pain of waiting he was inflicting on the faithful one, watching for him in that desolate and fearful place of graves! At last he ventured, — sliding along on his belly a few inches at a time, till, several rods from the house, he dared at last to spring to his feet and bound away at full speed for Hartsel's.

Hartsel's was one of those mongrel establishments to be seen nowhere except in Southern California. Half shop, half farm, half tavern, it gathered up to itself all the threads of the life of the whole region. Indians, ranchmen, travellers of all sorts, traded at Hartsel's, drank at Hartsel's, slept at Hartsel's. It was the only place of its kind within a radius of twenty miles; and it was the least bad place of its kind within a much wider radius.

Hartsel was by no means a bad fellow — when he

was sober; but as that condition was not so frequent as it should have been, he sometimes came near being a very bad fellow indeed. At such times everybody was afraid of him, — wife, children, travellers, ranchmen, and all. "It was only a question of time and occasion," they said, "Hartsel's killing somebody sooner or later;" and it looked as if the time were drawing near fast. But, out of his cups, Hartsel was kindly, and fairly truthful; entertaining, too, to a degree which held many a wayfarer chained to his chair till small hours of the morning, listening to his landlord's talk. How he had drifted from Alsace to San Diego County, he could hardly have told in minute detail himself, there had been so many stages and phases of the strange journey; but he had come to his last halt now. Here, in this Temecula, he would lay his bones. He liked the country. He liked the wild life, and, for a wonder, he liked the Indians. Many a good word he spoke for them to travellers who believed no good of the race, and evidently listened with polite incredulity when he would say, as he often did: "I've never lost a dollar off these Indians yet. They do all their trading with me. There's some of them I trust as high 's a hundred dollars. If they can't pay this year, they'll pay next; and if they die, their relations will pay their debts for them, a little at a time, till they've got it all paid off. They'll pay in wheat, or bring a steer, maybe, or baskets or mats the women make; but they'll pay. They're honester 'n the general run of

Mexicans about paying; I mean Mexicans that are as poor 's they are."

Hartsel's dwelling-house was a long, low adobe building, with still lower flanking additions, in which were bedrooms for travellers, the kitchen, and store-rooms. The shop was a separate building, of rough planks, a story and a half high, the loft of which was one great dormitory well provided with beds on the floor, but with no other article of bedroom furniture. They who slept in this loft had no fastidious standards of personal luxury. These two buildings, with some half-dozen out-houses of one sort and another, stood in an enclosure surrounded by a low white picket fence, which gave to the place a certain home-like look, spite of the neglected condition of the ground, which was bare sand, or sparsely tufted with weeds and wild grass. A few plants, parched and straggling, stood in pots and tin cans around the door of the dwelling-house. One hardly knew whether they made the place look less desolate or more so. But they were token of a woman's hand, and of a nature which craved something more than the unredeemed wilderness around her afforded.

A dull and lurid light streamed out from the wide-open door of the store. Alessandro drew cautiously near. The place was full of men, and he heard loud laughing and talking. He dared not go in. Stealing around to the rear, he leaped the fence, and went to the other house and opened the kitchen

door. Here he was not afraid. Mrs. Hartsel had never any but Indian servants in her employ. The kitchen was lighted only by one dim candle. On the stove were sputtering and hissing all the pots and frying-pans it would hold. Much cooking was evidently going on for the men who were noisily rollicking in the other house.

Seating himself by the fire, Alessandro waited. In a few moments Mrs. Hartsel came hurrying back to her work. It was no uncommon experience to find an Indian quietly sitting by her fire. In the dim light she did not recognize Alessandro, but mistook him, as he sat bowed over, his head in his hands, for old Ramon, who was a sort of recognized hanger-on of the place, earning his living there by odd jobs of fetching and carrying, and anything else he could do.

"Run, Ramon," she said, "and bring me more wood; this cottonwood is so dry, it burns out like rotten punk; I 'm off my feet to-night, with all these men to cook for;" then turning to the table, she began cutting her bread, and did not see how tall and unlike Ramon was the man who silently rose and went out to do her bidding. When, a few moments later, Alessandro re-entered, bringing a huge armful of wood, which it would have cost poor old Ramon three journeys at least to bring, and throwing it down on the hearth, said, "Will that be enough, Mrs. Hartsel?" she gave a scream of surprise, and dropped her knife. "Why, who —"

she began; then, seeing his face, her own lighting up with pleasure, she continued, "Alessandro! Is it you? Why, I took you in the dark for old Ramon! I thought you were in Pachanga."

"In Pachanga!" Then as yet no one had come from the Señora Moreno's to Hartsel's in search of him and the Señorita Ramona! Alessandro's heart felt almost light in his bosom. From the one immediate danger he had dreaded, they were safe; but no trace of emotion showed on his face, and he did not raise his eyes as he replied: "I have been in Pachanga. My father is dead. I have buried him there."

"Oh, Alessandro! Did he die?" cried the kindly woman, coming close to Alessandro, and laying her hand on his shoulder. "I heard he was sick." She paused; she did not know what to say. She had suffered so at the time of the ejectment of the Indians, that it had made her ill. For two days she had kept her doors shut and her windows close curtained, that she need not see the terrible sights. She was not a woman of many words. She was a Mexican, but there were those who said that some Indian blood ran in her veins. This was not improbable; and it seemed more than ever probable now, as she stood still by Alessandro's side, her hand on his shoulder, her eyes fixed in distress on his face. How he had altered! How well she recollected his lithe figure, his alert motion, his superb bearing, his handsome face, when she last saw him in the spring!

"You were away all summer, Alessandro?" she said at last, turning back to her work.

"Yes," he said; "at the Señora Moreno's."

"So I heard," she said. "That is a fine great place, is it not? Is her son grown a fine man? He was a lad when I saw him. He went through here with a drove of sheep once."

"Ay, he is a man now," said Alessandro, and buried his face in his hands again.

"Poor fellow! I don't wonder he does not want to speak," thought Mrs. Hartsel. "I'll just let him alone;" and she spoke no more for some moments.

Alessandro sat still by the fire. A strange apathy seemed to have seized him; at last he said wearily: "I must be going now. I wanted to see Mr. Hartsel a minute, but he seems to be busy in the store."

"Yes," she said, "a lot of San Francisco men; they belong to the company that's coming in here in the valley; they've been here two days. Oh, Alessandro," she continued, bethinking herself, "Jim's got your violin here; José brought it."

"Yes, I know it," answered Alessandro. "José told me; and that was one thing I stopped for."

"I'll run and get it," she exclaimed.

"No," said Alessandro, in a slow, husky voice. "I do not want it. I thought Mr. Hartsel might buy it. I want some money. It was not mine; it was my father's. It is a great deal better than mine. My father said it would bring a great deal of money. It is very old."

"Indeed it is," she replied; "one of those men in there was looking at it last night. He was astonished at it, and he would not believe Jim when he told him about its having come from the Mission."

"Does he play? Will he buy it?" cried Alessandro.

"I don't know; I'll call Jim," she said; and running out she looked in at the other door, saying, "Jim! Jim!"

Alas, Jim was in no condition to reply. At her first glance in his face, her countenance hardened into an expression of disgust and defiance. Returning to the kitchen, she said scornfully, disdaining all disguises, "Jim's drunk. No use your talking to him to-night. Wait till morning."

"Till morning!" A groan escaped from Alessandro, in spite of himself. "I can't!" he cried. "I must go on to-night."

"Why, what for?" exclaimed Mrs. Hartsel, much astonished. For one brief second Alessandro revolved in his mind the idea of confiding everything to her; only for a second, however. No; the fewer knew his secret and Ramona's, the better.

"I must be in San Diego to-morrow," he said.

"Got work there?" she said.

"Yes; that is, in San Pasquale," he said; "and I ought to have been there three days ago."

Mrs. Hartsel mused. "Jim can't do anything to-night," she said; "that's certain. You might see the man yourself, and ask him if he'd buy it."

Alessandro shook his head. An invincible repugnance withheld him. He could not face one of these Americans who were "coming in" to his valley. Mrs. Hartsel understood.

"I'll tell you, Alessandro," said the kindly woman, "I'll give you what money you need to-night, and then, if you say so, Jim 'll sell the violin to-morrow, if that man wants it, and you can pay me back out of that, and when you 're along this way again you can have the rest. Jim 'll make as good a trade for you 's he can. He 's a real good friend to all of you, Alessandro, when he 's himself."

"I know it, Mrs. Hartsel. I 'd trust Mr. Hartsel more than any other man in this country," said Alessandro. "He 's about the only white man I do trust!"

Mrs. Hartsel was fumbling in a deep pocket in her under-petticoat. Gold-piece after gold-piece she drew out. "Humph! Got more 'n I thought I had," she said. "I 've kept all that 's been paid in here to-day, for I knew Jim 'd be drunk before night."

Alessandro's eyes fastened on the gold. How he longed for an abundance of those little shining pieces for his Majella! He sighed as Mrs. Hartsel counted them out on the table, — one, two, three, four, bright five-dollar pieces.

"That is as much as I dare take," said Alessandro, when she put down the fourth. "Will you trust me for so much?" he added sadly. "You know I have

nothing left now. Mrs. Hartsel, I am only a beggar, till I get some work to do."

The tears came into Mrs. Hartsel's eyes. "It's a shame!" she said, — "a shame, Alessandro! Jim and I haven't thought of anything else, since it happened. Jim says they'll never prosper, never. Trust you? Yes, indeed. Jim and I'll trust you, or your father, the last day of our lives."

"I'm glad he is dead," said Alessandro, as he knotted the gold into his handkerchief and put it into his bosom. "But he was murdered, Mrs. Hartsel, — murdered, just as much as if they had fired a bullet into him."

"That's true!" she exclaimed vehemently. "I say so too; and so was José. That's just what I said at the time, — that bullets would not be half so inhuman!"

The words had hardly left her lips, when the door from the dining-room burst open, and a dozen men, headed by the drunken Jim, came stumbling, laughing, reeling into the kitchen.

"Where's supper? Give us our supper! What are you about with your Indian here? I'll teach you how to cook ham!" stammered Jim, making a lurch towards the stove. The men behind caught him and saved him. Eying the group with slow scorn, Mrs. Hartsel, who had not a cowardly nerve in her body, said: "Gentlemen, if you will take your seats at the table, I will bring in your supper immediately. It is all ready."

One or two of the soberer ones, shamed by her tone, led the rest back into the dining-room, where, seating themselves, they began to pound the table and swing the chairs, swearing, and singing ribald songs.

"Get off as quick as you can, Alessandro," whispered Mrs. Hartsel, as she passed by him, standing like a statue, his eyes, full of hatred and contempt, fixed on the tipsy group. "You'd better go. There's no knowing what they'll do next."

"Are you not afraid?" he said in a low tone.

"No!" she said. "I'm used to it. I can always manage Jim. And Ramon's round somewhere, — he and the bull-pups; if worse comes to worst, I can call the dogs. These San Francisco fellows are always the worst to get drunk. But you'd better get out of the way!"

"And these are the men that have stolen our lands, and killed my father, and José, and Carmena's baby!" thought Alessandro, as he ran swiftly back towards the graveyard. "And Father Salvierderra says, God is good. It must be the saints no longer pray to Him for us!"

But Alessandro's heart was too full of other thoughts, now, to dwell long on past wrongs, however bitter. The present called him too loudly. Putting his hand in his bosom, and feeling the soft, knotted handkerchief, he thought: "Twenty dollars! It is not much! But it will buy food for many days for my Majella and for Baba!"

XVIII

EXCEPT for the reassuring help of Carmena's presence by her side, Ramona would never have had courage to remain during this long hour in the graveyard. As it was, she twice resolved to bear the suspense no longer, and made a movement to go. The chance of Alessandro's encountering at Hartsel's the men sent in pursuit of him and of Baba, loomed in her thoughts into a more and more frightful danger each moment she reflected upon it. It was a most unfortunate suggestion for Alessandro to have made. Her excited fancy went on and on, picturing the possible scenes which might be going on almost within stone's-throw of where she was sitting, helpless, in the midnight darkness, — Ales-

sandro seized, tied, treated as a thief, and she, Ramona, not there to vindicate him, to terrify the men into letting him go. She could not bear it; she would ride boldly to Hartsel's door. But when she made a motion as if she would go, and said in the soft Spanish, of which Carmena knew no word, but which yet somehow conveyed Ramona's meaning, "I must go! It is too long! I cannot wait here!" Carmena had clasped her hand tighter, and said in the San Luiseno tongue, of which Ramona knew no word, but which yet somehow conveyed Carmena's meaning, "O beloved lady, you must not go! Waiting is the only safe thing. Alessandro said, to wait here. He will come." The word "Alessandro" was plain. Yes, Alessandro had said, wait; Carmena was right. She would obey, but it was a fearful ordeal. It was strange how Ramona, who felt herself preternaturally brave, afraid of nothing, so long as Alessandro was by her side, became timorous and wretched the instant he was lost to her sight. When she first heard his steps coming, she quivered with terror lest they might not be his. The next second she knew; and with a glad cry, "Alessandro! Alessandro!" she bounded to him, dropping Baba's reins.

Sighing gently, Carmena picked up the reins, and stood still, holding the horse, while the lovers clasped each other with breathless words. "How she loves Alessandro!" thought the widowed Carmena. "Will they leave him alive to stay with her? It is better

not to love!" But there was no bitter envy in her mind for the two who were thus blest while she went desolate. All of Pablo's people had great affection for Alessandro. They had looked forward to his being over them in his father's place. They knew his goodness, and were proud of his superiority to themselves.

"Majella, you tremble," said Alessandro, as he threw his arms around her. "You have feared! Yet you were not alone." He glanced at Carmena's motionless figure, standing by Baba.

"No, not alone, dear Alessandro; but it was so long!" replied Ramona; "and I feared the men had taken you, as you feared. Was there any one there?"

"No! No one had heard anything. All was well. They thought I had just come from Pachanga," he answered.

"Except for Carmena, I should have ridden after you half an hour ago," continued Ramona. "But she told me to wait."

"She told you!" repeated Alessandro. "How did you understand her speech?"

"I do not know. Was it not a strange thing?" replied Ramona. "She spoke in your tongue, but I thought I understood her. Ask her if she did not say that I must not go; that it was safer to wait; that you had so said, and you would soon come."

Alessandro repeated the words to Carmena. "Did you say that?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Carmena.

"You see, then, she has understood the Luiseno words," he said delightedly. "She is one of us."

"Yes," said Carmena, gravely, "she is one of us!" Then, taking Ramona's hand in both of her own for farewell, she repeated, in a tone as of dire prophecy, "One of us, Alessandro! one of us!" And as she gazed after their retreating forms, almost immediately swallowed and lost in the darkness, she repeated the words again to herself, — "One of us! one of us! Sorrow came to me; she rides to meet it!" and she crept back to her husband's grave, and threw herself down, to watch till the dawn.

The road which Alessandro would naturally have taken would carry them directly by Hartsel's again. But, wishing to avoid all risk of meeting or being seen by any of the men on the place, he struck well out to the north, to make a wide circuit around it. This brought them past the place where Antonio's house had stood. Here Alessandro halted, and putting his hand on Baba's rein, walked the horses close to the pile of ruined walls. "This was Antonio's house, Majella," he whispered. "I wish every house in the valley had been pulled down like this. Old Juana was right. The Americans are living in my father's house, Majella," he went on, his whisper growing thick with rage. "That was what kept me so long. I was looking in at the window at them eating their supper. I thought I should go mad, Majella. If I had had my gun, I should have shot them all dead!"

An almost inarticulate gasp was Ramona's first reply to this. "Living in your house!" she said. "You saw them?"

"Yes," he said; "the man, and his wife, and two little children; and the man came out, with his gun, on the doorstep, and fired it. They thought they heard something moving, and it might be an Indian; so he fired. That was what kept me so long."

Just at this moment Baba tripped over some small object on the ground. A few steps farther, and he tripped again. "There is something caught round his foot, Alessandro," said Ramona. "It keeps moving."

Alessandro jumped off his horse, and kneeling down, exclaimed, "It's a stake, — and the lariat fastened to it. Holy Virgin! what — " The rest of his ejaculation was inaudible. The next Ramona knew, he had run swiftly on, a rod or two. Baba had followed, and Capitan and the pony; and there stood a splendid black horse, as big as Baba, and Alessandro talking under his breath to him, and clapping both his hands over the horse's nose, to stop him, as often as he began whinnying; and it seemed hardly a second more before he had his saddle off the poor little Indian pony, and striking it sharply on its sides had turned it free, had saddled the black horse, and leaping on his back, said, with almost a sob in his voice: "My Majella, it is Benito, my own Benito. Now the saints indeed have helped us! Oh, the ass, the idiot, to stake out Benito with

such a stake as that! A jack rabbit had pulled it up. Now, my Majella, we will gallop! Faster! faster! I will not breathe easy till we are out of this cursed valley. When we are once in the Santa Margarita Cañon, I know a trail they will never find!"

Like the wind galloped Benito, — Alessandro half lying on his back, stroking his forehead, whispering to him, the horse snorting with joy: which were gladder of the two, horse or man, could not be said. And neck by neck with Benito came Baba. How the ground flew away under their feet! This was companionship, indeed, worthy of Baba's best powers. Not in all the California herds could be found two superber horses than Benito and Baba. A wild, almost reckless joy took possession of Alessandro. Ramona was half terrified as she heard him still talking, talking to Benito. For an hour they did not draw rein. Both Benito and Alessandro knew every inch of the ground. Then, just as they had descended into the deepest part of the cañon, Alessandro suddenly reined sharply to the left, and began climbing the precipitous wall. "Can you follow, dearest Majella?" he cried.

"Do you suppose Benito can do anything that Baba cannot?" she retorted, pressing on closely.

But Baba did not like it. Except for the stimulus of Benito ahead, he would have given Ramona trouble.

"There is only a little, rough like this, dear," called Alessandro, as he leaped a fallen tree, and

halted to see how Baba took it. "Good!" he cried, as Baba jumped it like a deer. "Good! Majella! We have got the two best horses in the country. You 'll see they are alike, when daylight comes. I have often wondered they were so much alike. They would go together splendidly."

After a few rods of this steep climbing they came out on the top of the cañon's south wall, in a dense oak forest comparatively free from underbrush. "Now," said Alessandro, "I can go from here to San Diego by paths that no white man knows. We will be near there before daylight."

Already the keen salt air of the ocean smote their faces. Ramona drank it in with delight. "I taste salt in the air, Alessandro," she cried.

"Yes, it is the sea," he said. "This cañon leads straight to the sea. I wish we could go by the shore, Majella. It is beautiful there. When it is still, the waves come as gently to the land as if they were in play; and you can ride along with your horse's feet in the water, and the green cliffs almost over your head; and the air off the water is like wine in one's head."

"Cannot we go there?" she said longingly. "Would it not be safe?"

"I dare not," he answered regretfully. "Not now, Majella; for on the shore-way, at all times, there are people going and coming."

"Some other time, Alessandro, we can come, after we are married, and there is no danger?" she asked.

"Yes, Majella," he replied; but as he spoke the words, he thought, "Will a time ever come when there will be no danger?"

The shore of the Pacific Ocean for many miles north of San Diego is a succession of rounding promontories, walling the mouths of cañons, down many of which small streams make to the sea. These cañons are green and rich at bottom, and filled with trees, chiefly oak. Beginning as little more than rifts in the ground, they deepen and widen, till at their mouths they have a beautiful crescent of shining beach from an eighth to a quarter of a mile long. The one which Alessandro hoped to reach before morning was not a dozen miles from the old town of San Diego, and commanded a fine view of the outer harbor. When he was last in it, he had found it a nearly impenetrable thicket of young oak-trees. Here, he believed, they could hide safely all day, and after nightfall ride into San Diego, be married at the priest's house, and push on to San Pasquale that same night. "All day, in that cañon, Majella can look at the sea," he thought; "but I will not tell her now, for it may be the trees have been cut down, and we cannot be so close to the shore."

It was near sunrise when they reached the place. The trees had not been cut down. Their tops, seen from above, looked like a solid bed of moss filling in the cañon bottom. The sky and the sea were both red. As Ramona looked down into the soft green

pathway, it seemed, leading out to the wide and sparkling sea, she thought Alessandro had brought her into a fairy-land.

"What a beautiful world!" she cried; and riding up so close to Benito that she could lay her hand on Alessandro's, she said solemnly: "Do you not think we ought to be very happy, Alessandro, in such a beautiful world as this? Do you think we might sing our sunrise hymn here?"

Alessandro glanced around. They were alone on the breezy open; it was not yet full dawn; great masses of crimson vapor were floating upward from the hills behind San Diego. The light was still burning in the light-house on the promontory walling the inner harbor, but in a few moments more it would be day. "No, Majella, not here!" he said. "We must not stay. As soon as the sun rises, a man or a horse may be seen on this upper coast-line as far as eye can reach. We must be among the trees with all the speed we can make."

It was like a house with a high, thick roof of oak tree-tops, the shelter they found. No sun penetrated it; a tiny trickle of water still remained, and some grass along its rims was still green, spite of the long drought, — a scanty meal for Baba and Benito, but they ate it with relish in each other's company.

"They like each other, those two," said Ramona, laughing, as she watched them. "They will be friends."

"Ay," said Alessandro, also smiling. "Horses are

friends, like men, and can hate each other, like men, too. Benito would never see Antonio's mare, the little yellow one, that he did not let fly his heels at her; and she was as afraid, at sight of him, as a cat is at a dog. Many a time I have laughed to see it."

"Know you the priest at San Diego?" asked Ramona.

"Not well," replied Alessandro. "He came seldom to Temecula when I was there; but he is a friend of Indians. I know he came with the men from San Diego at the time when there was fighting, and the whites were in great terror; and they said, except for Father Gaspara's words, there would not have been a white man left alive in Pala. My father had sent all his people away before that fight began. He knew it was coming, but he would have nothing to do with it. He said the Indians were all crazy. It was no use. They would only be killed themselves. That is the worst thing, my Majella. The stupid Indians fight and kill, and then what can we do? The white men think we are all the same. Father Gaspara has never been to Pala, I heard, since that time. There goes there now the San Juan Capistrano priest. He is a bad man. He takes money from the starving poor."

"A priest!" ejaculated Ramona, horror-stricken.

"Ay! a priest!" replied Alessandro. "They are not all good,— not like Father Salvierderra."

"Oh, if we could but have gone to Father Salvierderra!" exclaimed Ramona, involuntarily.

Alessandro looked distressed. "It would have been much more danger, Majella," he said, "and I had no knowledge of work I could do there."

His look made Ramona remorseful at once. How cruel to lay one feather-weight of additional burden on this loving man! "Oh, this is much better, really," she said. "I did not mean what I said. It is only because I have always loved Father Salvierderra so. And the Señora will tell him what is not true. Could we not send him a letter, Alessandro?"

"There is a Santa Inez Indian I know," replied Alessandro, "who comes down with nets to sell, sometimes, to Temecula. I know not if he goes to San Diego. If I could get speech with him, he would go up from Santa Inez to Santa Barbara for me, I am sure; for once he lay in my father's house, sick for many weeks, and I nursed him, and since then he is always begging me to take a net from him, whenever he comes. It is not two days from Santa Inez to Santa Barbara."

"I wish it were the olden time now, Alessandro," sighed Ramona, "when the men like Father Salvierderra had all the country. Then there would be work for all, at the Missions. The Señora says the Missions were like palaces, and that there were thousands of Indians in every one of them; thousands and thousands, all working so happy and peaceful."

"The Señora does not know all that happened at the Missions," replied Alessandro. "My father says that at some of them were dreadful things, when bad

men had power. Never any such things at San Luis Rey. Father Peyri was like a father to all his Indians. My father says that they would all of them lie down in a fire for him, if he had commanded it. And when he went away, to leave the country, when his heart was broken, and the Mission all ruined, he had to fly by night, Majella, just as you and I have done; for if the Indians had known it, they would have risen up to keep him. There was a ship here in San Diego harbor, to sail for Mexico, and the Father made up his mind to go in it; and it was over this same road we have come, my Majella, that he rode, and by night; and my father was the only one he trusted to know it. My father came with him; they took the swiftest horses, and they rode all night, and my father carried in front of him, on the horse, a box of the sacred things of the altar, very heavy. And many a time my father has told me the story, how they got to San Diego at daybreak, and the Father was rowed out to the ship in a little boat; and not much more than on board was he, my father standing like one dead on the shore, watching, he loved him so, when, lo! he heard a great crying, and shouting, and trampling of horses' feet, and there came galloping down to the water's edge three hundred of the Indians from San Luis Rey, who had found out that the Father had gone to San Diego to take ship, and they had ridden all night on his track, to fetch him back. And when my father pointed to the ship, and told them he was already on board, they

set up a cry fit to bring the very sky down; and some of them flung themselves into the sea, and swam out to the ship, and cried and begged to be taken on board and go with him. And Father Peyri stood on the deck, blessing them, and saying farewell, with the tears running on his face; and one of the Indians — how they never knew — made shift to climb up on the chains and ropes, and got into the ship itself; and they let him stay, and he sailed away with the Father. And my father said he was all his life sorry that he himself had not thought to do the same thing; but he was like one dumb and deaf and with no head, he was so unhappy at the Father's going."

"Was it here, in this very harbor?" asked Ramona, in breathless interest, pointing out towards the blue water of which they could see a broad belt framed by their leafy foreground arch of oak tops.

"Ay, just there he sailed, — as that ship goes now," he exclaimed, as a white-sailed schooner sailed swiftly by, going out to sea. "But the ship lay at first inside the bar; you cannot see the inside harbor from here. It is the most beautiful water I have ever seen, Majella. The two high lands come out like two arms to hold it and keep it safe, as if they loved it."

"But, Alessandro," continued Ramona, "were there really bad men at the other Missions? Surely not the Franciscan Fathers?"

"Perhaps not the Fathers themselves, but the men

under them. It was too much power, Majella. When my father has told me how it was, it has seemed to me I should not have liked to be as he was. It is not right that one man should have so much power. There was one at the San Gabriel Mission; he was an Indian. He had been set over the rest; and when a whole band of them ran away one time, and went back into the mountains, he went after them; and he brought back a piece of each man's ear; the pieces were strung on a string; and he laughed, and said that was to know them by again, — by their clipped ears. An old woman, a Gabrieleno, who came over to Temecula, told me she saw that. She lived at the Mission herself. The Indians did not all want to come to the Missions; some of them preferred to stay in the woods, and live as they always had lived; and I think they had a right to do that if they preferred, Majella. It was stupid of them to stay and be like beasts, and not know anything; but do you not think they had the right?"

"It is the command to preach the gospel to every creature," replied the pious Ramona. "That is what Father Salvierderra said was the reason the Franciscans came here. I think they ought to have made the Indians listen. But that was dreadful about the ears, Alessandro. Do you believe it?"

"The old woman laughed when she told it," he answered. "She said it was a joke; so I think it was true. I know I would have killed the man who tried to crop my ears that way."

"Did you ever tell that to Father Salvierderra?" asked Ramona.

"No, Majella. It would not be polite," said Alessandro.

"Well, I don't believe it," replied Ramona, in a relieved tone. "I don't believe any Franciscan ever could have permitted such things."

The great red light in the light-house tower had again blazed out, and had been some time burning, before Alessandro thought it prudent to resume their journey. The road on which they must go into old San Diego, where Father Gaspara lived, was the public road from San Diego to San Luis Rey, and they were almost sure to meet travellers on it.

But their fleet horses bore them so well, that it was not late when they reached the town. Father Gaspara's house was at the end of a long, low adobe building, which had served no mean purpose in the old Presidio days, but was now fallen into decay; and all its rooms, except those occupied by the Father, had been long uninhabited. On the opposite side of the way, in a neglected, weedy open, stood his chapel, — a poverty-stricken little place, its walls imperfectly whitewashed, decorated by a few coarse pictures and by broken sconces of looking-glass, rescued in their dilapidated condition from the Mission buildings now gone utterly to ruin. In these had been put candle-holders of common tin, in which a few cheap candles dimly lighted the room. Everything about it was in unison with the atmosphere of the place, — the most

profoundly melancholy in all Southern California. Here was the spot where that grand old Franciscan, Padre Junipero Serra, began his work, full of the devout and ardent purpose to reclaim the wilderness and its peoples to his country and his Church; on this very beach he went up and down for those first terrible weeks, nursing the sick, praying with the dying, and burying the dead, from the pestilence-stricken Mexican ships lying in the harbor. Here he baptized his first Indian converts, and founded his first Mission. And the only traces now remaining of his heroic labors and hard-won successes were a pile of crumbling ruins, a few old olive-trees and palms; in less than another century even these would be gone; returned into the keeping of that mother, the earth, who puts no headstones at the sacredest of her graves.

Father Gaspara had been for many years at San Diego. Although not a Franciscan, having, indeed, no especial love for the order, he had been from the first deeply impressed by the holy associations of the place. He had a nature at once fiery and poetic; there were but three things he could have been, — a soldier, a poet, or a priest. Circumstances had made him a priest; and the fire and the poetry which would have wielded the sword or kindled the verse, had he found himself set either to fight or to sing, had all gathered into added force in his priestly vocation. The look of a soldier he had never quite lost, — neither the look nor the tread; and his flashing dark eyes,

heavy black hair and beard, and quick elastic step, seemed sometimes strangely out of harmony with his priest's gown. And it was the sensitive soul of the poet in him which had made him withdraw within himself more and more, year after year, as he found himself comparatively powerless to do anything for the hundreds of Indians that he would fain have seen gathered once more, as of old, into the keeping of the Church. He had made frequent visits to them in their shifting refuges, following up family after family, band after band, that he knew; he had written bootless letter after letter to the Government officials of one sort and another, at Washington. He had made equally bootless efforts to win some justice, some protection for them, from officials nearer home; he had endeavored to stir the Church itself to greater efficiency in their behalf. Finally, weary, disheartened, and indignant with that intense, suppressed indignation which the poetic temperament alone can feel, he had ceased, — had said, "It is of no use; I will speak no word; I am done; I can bear no more!" and settling down into the routine of his parochial duties to the little Mexican and Irish congregation of his charge in San Diego, he had abandoned all effort to do more for the Indians than visit their chief settlements once or twice a year, to administer the sacraments. When fresh outrages were brought to his notice, he paced his room, plucked fiercely at his black beard, with ejaculations, it is to be feared, savoring more of the camp than the altar; but he made no effort to do

anything. Lighting his pipe, he would sit down on the old bench in his tile-paved veranda, and smoke by the hour, gazing out on the placid water of the deserted harbor, brooding, ever brooding, over the wrongs he could not redress.

A few paces off from his door stood the just begun walls of a fine brick church, which it had been the dream and pride of his heart to see builded, and full of worshippers. This, too, had failed. With San Diego's repeatedly vanishing hopes and dreams of prosperity had gone this hope and dream of Father Gaspara's. It looked, now, as if it would be indeed a waste of money to build a costly church on this site. Sentiment, however sacred and loving towards the dead, must yield to the demands of the living. To build a church on the ground where Father Junipero first trod and labored, would be a work to which no Catholic could be indifferent; but there were other and more pressing claims to be met first. This was right. Yet the sight of these silent walls, only a few feet high, was a sore one to Father Gaspara, — a daily cross, which he did not find grow lighter as he paced up and down his veranda, year in and year out, in the balmy winter and cool summer of that magic climate.

"Majella, the chapel is lighted; but that is good!" exclaimed Alessandro, as they rode into the silent plaza. "Father Gaspara must be there;" and jumping off his horse, he peered in at the uncurtained window. "A marriage, Majella, — a marriage!" he

cried, hastily returning. "This, too, is good fortune. We need not to wait long."

When the sacristan whispered to Father Gaspara that an Indian couple had just come in, wishing to be married, the Father frowned. His supper was waiting; he had been out all day, over at the old Mission olive-orchard, where he had not found things to his mind; the Indian man and wife whom he hired to take care of the few acres the Church yet owned there had been neglecting the Church lands and trees, to look after their own. The Father was vexed, tired, and hungry, and the expression with which he regarded Alessandro and Ramona, as they came towards him, was one of the least prepossessing of which his dark face was capable. Ramona, who had never knelt to any priest save the gentle Father Salvierderra, and who had supposed that all priests must look, at least, friendly, was shocked at the sight of the impatient visage confronting her. But, as his first glance fell on Ramona, Father Gaspara's expression changed.

"What is all this?" he thought; and as quick as he thought it, he exclaimed, in a severe tone, looking at Ramona, "Woman, are you an Indian?"

"Yes, Father," answered Ramona, gently. "My mother was an Indian."

"Ah! half-breed!" thought Father Gaspara. "It is strange how sometimes one of the types will conquer, and sometimes another! But this is no common creature;" and it was with a look of new interest and

sympathy on his face that he proceeded with the ceremony, — the other couple, a middle-aged Irishman, with his more than middle-aged bride, standing quietly by, and looking on with a vague sort of wonder in their ugly, impassive faces, as if it struck them oddly that Indians should marry.

The book of the marriage-records was kept in Father Gaspara's own rooms, locked up and hidden even from his old housekeeper. He had had bitter reason to take this precaution. It had been for more than one man's interest to cut leaves out of this old record, which dated back to 1769, and had many pages written full in the hand of Father Junipero himself.

As they came out of the chapel, Father Gaspara leading the way, the Irish couple shambling along shamefacedly apart from each other, Alessandro, still holding Ramona's hand in his, said, "Will you ride, dear? It is but a step."

"No, thanks, dear Alessandro, I would rather walk," she replied; and Alessandro slipping the bridles of the two horses over his left arm, they walked on. Father Gaspara heard the question and answer, and was still more puzzled.

"He speaks as a gentleman speaks to a lady," he mused. "What does it mean? Who are they?"

Father Gaspara was a well-born man, and in his home in Spain had been used to associations far superior to any which he had known in his Californian life. A gentle courtesy of tone and speech, such

as that with which Alessandro had addressed Ramona, was not often heard in his parish. When they entered his house, he again regarded them both attentively. Ramona wore on her head the usual black shawl of the Mexican women. There was nothing distinctive, to the Father's eye, in her figure or face. In the dim light of the one candle, — Father Gaspara allowed himself no luxuries, — the exquisite coloring of her skin and the deep blue of her eyes were not to be seen. Alessandro's tall figure and dignified bearing were not uncommon. The Father had seen many as fine-looking Indian men. But his voice was remarkable, and he spoke better Spanish than was wont to be heard from Indians.

"Where are you from?" said the Father, as he held his pen poised in hand, ready to write their names in the old raw-hide-bound book.

"Temecula, Father," replied Alessandro.

Father Gaspara dropped his pen. "The village the Americans drove out the other day?" he cried.

"Yes, Father."

Father Gaspara sprang from his chair, took refuge from his excitement, as usual, in pacing the floor. "Go! go! I'm done with you! It's all over," he said fiercely to the Irish bride and groom, who had given him their names and their fee, but were still hanging about irresolute, not knowing if all were ended or not. "A burning shame! The most dastardly thing I have seen yet in this land forsaken of God!" cried the Father. "I saw the particulars of

it in the San Diego paper yesterday." Then, coming to a halt in front of Alessandro, he exclaimed: "The paper said that the Indians were compelled to pay all the costs of the suit; that the sheriff took their cattle to do it. Was that true?"

"Yes, Father," replied Alessandro.

The Father strode up and down again, plucking at his beard. "What are you going to do?" he said. "Where have you all gone? There were two hundred in your village the last time I was there."

"Some have gone over into Pachanga," replied Alessandro, "some to San Pasquale, and the rest to San Bernardino."

"Body of Jesus! man! But you take it with philosophy!" stormed Father Gaspara.

Alessandro did not understand the word "philosophy," but he knew what the Father meant. "Yes, Father," he said doggedly. "It is now twenty-one days ago. I was not so at first. There is nothing to be done."

Ramona held tight to Alessandro's hand. She was afraid of this fierce, black-bearded priest, who dashed back and forth, pouring out angry invectives.

"The United States Government will suffer for it!" he continued. "It is a Government of thieves and robbers! God will punish them. You will see; they will be visited with a curse, — a curse in their borders; their sons and their daughters shall be desolate! But why do I prate in these vain words? My son, tell me your names again;" and he seated himself once more

at the table where the ancient marriage-record lay open.

After writing Alessandro's name, he turned to Ramona. "And the woman's?" he said.

Alessandro looked at Ramona. In the chapel he had said simply, "Majella." What name should he give more?

Without a second's hesitation, Ramona answered, "Majella. Majella Phail is my name."

She pronounced the word "Phail," slowly. It was new to her. She had never seen it written; as it lingered on her lips, the Father, to whom also it was a new word, misunderstood it, took it to be in two syllables, and so wrote it.

The last step was taken in the disappearance of Ramona. How should any one, searching in after years, find any trace of Ramona Ortegna, in the woman married under the name of "Majella Fayeel"?

"No, no! Put up your money, son," said Father Gaspara, as Alessandro began to undo the knots of the handkerchief in which his gold was tied. "Put up your money. I'll take no money from a Temecula Indian. I would the Church had money to give you. Where are you going now?"

"To San Pasquale, Father."

"Ah! San Pasquale! The head man there has the old pueblo paper," said Father Gaspara. "He was showing it to me the other day. That will, it may be, save you there. But do not trust to it, son. Buy

yourself a piece of land as the white man buys his. Trust to nothing."

Alessandro looked anxiously in the Father's face. "How is that, Father?" he said. "I do not know."

"Well, their rules be thick as the crabs here on the beach," replied Father Gaspara; "and, faith, they appear to me to be backwards of motion also, like the crabs: but the lawyers understand. When you have picked out your land, and have the money, come to me, and I will go with you and see that you are not cheated in the buying, so far as I can tell; but I myself am at my wit's ends with their devices. Farewell, son! Farewell, daughter!" he said, rising from his chair. Hunger was again getting the better of sympathy in Father Gaspara, and as he sat down to his long-deferred supper, the Indian couple faded from his mind; but after supper was over, as he sat smoking his pipe on the veranda, they returned again, and lingered in his thoughts, — lingered strangely, it seemed to him; he could not shake off the impression that there was something unusual about the woman. "I shall hear of them again, some day," he thought. And he thought rightly.

XIX

AFTER leaving Father Gaspara's door, Alessandro and Ramona rode slowly through the now deserted plaza, and turned northward, on the river road, leaving the old Presidio walls on their right. The river was low, and they forded it without difficulty.

"I have seen this river so high that there was no fording it for many days," said Alessandro; "but that was in spring."

"Then it is well we came not at that time," said Ramona. "All the times have fallen out well for us, Alessandro, — the dark nights, and the streams low; but look! as I say it, there comes the moon!" and

she pointed to the fine threadlike arc of the new moon, just visible in the sky. "Not big enough to do us any harm, however," she added. "But, dear Alessandro, do you not think we are safe now?"

"I know not, Majella, if ever we may be safe; but I hope so. I have been all day thinking I had gone foolish last night, when I told Mrs. Hartsel that I was on my way to San Pasquale. But if men should come there asking for us, she would understand, I think, and keep a still tongue. She would keep harm from us if she could."

Their way from San Diego to San Pasquale lay at first along a high mesa, or table-land, covered with low shrub growths; after some ten or twelve miles of this, they descended among winding ridges, into a narrow valley, — the Poway valley. It was here that the Mexicans made one of their few abortive efforts to repel the American forces.

"Here were some Americans killed, in a fight with the Mexicans, Majella," said Alessandro. "I myself have a dozen bullets which I picked up in the ground about here. Many a time I have looked at them and thought if there should come another war against the Americans, I would fire them again, if I could. Does Señor Felipe think there is any likelihood that his people will rise against them any more? If they would, they would have all the Indians to help them, now. It would be a mercy if they might be driven out of the land, Majella."

"Yes," sighed Majella. "But there is no hope.

I have heard the Señora speak of it with Felipe. There is no hope. They have power, and great riches, she said. Money is all that they think of. To get money, they will commit any crime, even murder. Every day there comes the news of their murdering each other for gold. Mexicans kill each other only for hate, Alessandro, — for hate, or in anger; never for gold."

"Indians, also," replied Alessandro. "Never one Indian killed another, yet, for money. It is for vengeance, always. For money! Bah! Majella, they are dogs!"

Rarely did Alessandro speak with such vehemence; but this last outrage on his people had kindled in his veins a fire of scorn and hatred which would never die out. Trust in an American was henceforth to him impossible. The name was a synonym for fraud and cruelty.

"They cannot all be so bad, I think, Alessandro," said Ramona. "There must be some that are honest; do you not think so?"

"Where are they, then," he cried fiercely, — "the ones who are good? Among my people there are always some that are bad; but they are in disgrace. My father punished them, the whole people punished them. If there are Americans who are good, who will not cheat and kill, why do they not send after these robbers and punish them? And how is it that they make laws which cheat? It was the American law which took Temecula away from us, and gave

it to those men! The law was on the side of the thieves. No, Majella, it is a people that steals! That is their name, — a people that steals, and that kills for money. Is not that a good name for a great people to bear, when they are like the sands in the sea, they are so many?"

"That is what the Señora says," answered Ramona. "She says they are all thieves; that she knows not, each day, but that on the next will come more of them, with new laws, to take away more of her land. She had once more than twice what she has now, Alessandro."

"Yes," he replied; "I know it. My father has told me. He was with Father Peyri at the place, when General Moreno was alive. Then all was his to the sea, — all that land we rode over the second night, Majella."

"Yes," she said, "all to the sea! That is what the Señora is ever saying: 'To the sea!' Oh, the beautiful sea! Can we behold it from San Pasquale, Alessandro?"

"No, my Majella, it is too far. San Pasquale is in the valley; it has hills all around it like walls. But it is good. Majella will love it; and I will build a house, Majella. All the people will help me. That is the way with our people. In two days it will be done. But it will be a poor place for my Majella," he said sadly. Alessandro's heart was ill at ease. Truly a strange bride's journey was this; but Ramona felt no fear.

"No place can be so poor that I do not choose it, if you are there, rather than the most beautiful place in the world where you are not, Alessandro," she said.

"But my Majella loves things that are beautiful," said Alessandro. "She has lived like a queen."

"Oh, Alessandro," merrily laughed Ramona, "how little you know of the way queens live! Nothing was fine at the Señora Moreno's, only comfortable; and any house you will build, I can make as comfortable as that was; it is nothing but trouble to have one so large as the Señora's. Margarita used to be tired to death, sweeping all those rooms in which nobody lived except the blessed old San Luis Rey saints. Alessandro, if we could have had just one statue, either Saint Francis or the Madonna, to bring luck to our house! That is what I would like better than all other things in the world. It is beautiful to sleep with the Madonna close to your bed. She speaks often to you in dreams."

Alessandro fixed serious, questioning eyes on Ramona as she uttered these words. When she spoke like this, he felt indeed as if a being of some other sphere had come to dwell by his side. "I cannot find how to feel towards the saints as you do, my Majella," he said. "I am afraid of them. It must be because they love you, and do not love us. That is what I believe, Majella. I believe they are displeased with us, and no longer make mention of us in heaven. That is what the Fathers taught that the

saints were ever doing, — praying to God for us, and to the Virgin and Jesus. It is not possible, you see, that they could have been praying for us, and yet such things have happened, as happened in Temecula. I do not know how it is my people have displeased them."

"I think Father Salvierderra would say that it is a sin to be afraid of the saints, Alessandro," replied Ramona, earnestly. "He has often told me that it was a sin to be unhappy; and that withheld me many times from being wretched because the Señora would not love me. And, Alessandro," she went on, growing more and more fervent in tone, "even if nothing but misfortune comes to people, that does not prove that the saints do not love them; for when the saints were on earth themselves, look what they suffered: martyrs they were, almost all of them. Look at what holy Saint Catharine endured, and the blessed Saint Agnes. It is not by what happens to us here in this world that we can tell if the saints love us, or if we will see the Blessed Virgin."

"How can we tell, then?" he asked.

"By what we feel in our hearts, Alessandro," she replied; "just as I knew all the time, when you did not come, — I knew that you loved me. I knew that in my heart; and I shall always know it, no matter what happens. If you are dead, I shall know that you love me. And you, — you will know that I love you, the same."

"Yes," said Alessandro, reflectively, "that is

true. But, Majella, it is not possible to have the same thoughts about a saint as about a person that one has seen, and heard the voice, and touched the hand."

"No, not quite," said Ramona; "not quite, about a saint; but one can for the Blessed Virgin, Alessandro! I am sure of that. Her statue, in my room at the Señora's, has been always my mother. Ever since I was little I have told her all I did. It was she helped me to plan what I should bring away with us. She reminded me of many things I had forgotten, except for her."

"Did you hear her speak?" said Alessandro, awe-stricken.

"Not exactly in words; but just the same as in words," replied Ramona, confidently. "You see when you sleep in the room with her, it is very different from what it is if you only see her in a chapel. Oh, I could never be very unhappy with her in my room!"

"I would almost go and steal it for you, Majella," cried Alessandro, with sacrilegious warmth.

"Holy Virgin!" cried Ramona, "never speak such a word. You would be struck dead if you laid your hand on her! I fear even the thought was a sin."

"There was a small figure of her in the wall of our house," said Alessandro. "It was from San Luis Rey. I do not know what became of it, — if it were left behind, or if they took it with my

father's things to Pachanga. I did not see it there. When I go again, I will look."

"Again!" cried Ramona. "What say you? You go again to Pachanga? You will not leave me, Alessandro?"

At the bare mention of Alessandro's leaving her, Ramona's courage always vanished. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, she was transformed from the dauntless, confident, sunny woman, who bore him up as it were on wings of hope and faith, to a timid, shrinking, despondent child, crying out in alarm, and clinging to the hand.

"After a time, dear Majella, when you are wonted to the place, I must go, to fetch the wagon and the few things that were ours. There is the raw-hide bed which was Father Peyri's, and he gave to my father. Majella will like to lie on that. My father believed it had great virtue."

"Like that you made for Felipe?" she asked.

"Yes; but it is not so large. In those days the cattle were not so large as they are now: this is not so broad as Señor Felipe's. There are chairs, too, from the Mission, three of them, one almost as fine as those on your veranda at home. They were given to my father. And music-books, — beautiful parchment books! Oh, I hope those are not lost, Majella! If José had lived, he would have looked after it all. But in the confusion, all the things belonging to the village were thrown into wagons together, and no one knew where anything

was. But all the people knew my father's chairs and the books of the music. If the Americans did not steal them, everything will be safe. My people do not steal. There was never but one thief in our village, and my father had him so whipped, he ran away and never came back. I heard he was living in San Jacinto, and was a thief yet, spite of all that whipping he had. I think if it is in the blood to be a thief, not even whipping will take it out, Majella."

"Like the Americans," she said, half laughing, but with tears in the voice. "Whipping would not cure them."

It wanted yet more than an hour of dawn when they reached the crest of the hill from which they looked down on the San Pasquale valley. Two such crests and valleys they had passed; this was the broadest of the three valleys, and the hills walling it were softer and rounder of contour than any they had yet seen. To the east and northeast lay ranges of high mountains, their tops lost in the clouds. The whole sky was overcast and gray.

"If it were spring, this would mean rain," said Alessandro; "but it cannot rain, I think, now."

"No!" laughed Ramona, "not till we get our house done. Will it be of adobe, Alessandro?"

"Dearest Majella, not yet! At first it must be of the tule. They are very comfortable while it is warm, and before winter I will build one of adobe."

"Two houses! Wasteful Alessandro! If the tule

house is good, I shall not let you, Alessandro, build another."

Ramona's mirthful moments bewildered Alessandro. To his slower temperament and saddened nature they seemed preternatural; as if she were all of a sudden changed into a bird, or some gay creature outside the pale of human life, — outside and above it.

"You speak as the birds sing, my Majella," he said slowly. "It was well to name you Majel; only the wood-dove has not joy in her voice, as you have. She says only that she loves and waits."

"I say that, too, Alessandro!" replied Ramona, reaching out both her arms towards him.

The horses were walking slowly, and very close side by side. Baba and Benito were now such friends they liked to pace closely side by side; and Baba and Benito were by no means without instinctive recognitions of the sympathy between their riders. Already Benito knew Ramona's voice, and answered it with pleasure; and Baba had long ago learned to stop when his mistress laid her hand on Alessandro's shoulder. He stopped now, and it was long minutes before he had the signal to go on again.

"Majella! Majella!" cried Alessandro, as, grasping both her hands in his, he held them to his cheeks, to his neck, to his mouth, "if the saints would ask Alessandro to be a martyr for Majella's sake, like those she was telling of, then she would know if

Alessandro loved her! But what can Alessandro do now? What, oh, what? Majella gives all; Alessandro gives nothing!" and he bowed his forehead on her hands, before he put them back gently on Baba's neck.

Tears filled Ramona's eyes. How should she win this saddened man, this distrusting lover, to the joy which was his desert? "Alessandro can do one thing," she said, insensibly falling into his mode of speaking, — "one thing for his Majella: never, never, never say that he has nothing to give her. When he says that, he makes Majella a liar; for she has said that he is all the world to her, — he himself all the world which she desires. Is Majella a liar?"

But it was even now with an ecstasy only half joy, the other half anguish, that Alessandro replied: "Majella cannot lie. Majella is like the saints. Alessandro is hers."

When they rode down into the valley, the whole village was astir. The vintage-time had nearly passed; everywhere were to be seen large, flat baskets of grapes drying in the sun. Old women and children were turning these, or pounding acorns in the deep stone bowls; others were beating the yucca-stalks, and putting them to soak in water; the oldest women were sitting on the ground, weaving baskets. There were not many men in the village now; two large bands were away at work, — one at the autumn sheep-shearing, and one working on a large irrigating ditch at San Bernardino.

In different directions from the village slow-moving herds of goats or of cattle could be seen, being driven to pasture on the hills; some men were ploughing; several groups were at work building houses of bundles of the tule reeds.

"These are some of the Temecula people," said Alessandro; "they are building themselves new houses here. See those piles of bundles darker-colored than the rest. Those are their old roofs they brought from Temecula. There, there comes Ysidro!" he cried joyfully, as a man, well-mounted, who had been riding from point to point in the village, came galloping towards them. As soon as Ysidro recognized Alessandro, he flung himself from his horse. Alessandro did the same, and both running swiftly towards each other till they met, they embraced silently. Ramona, riding up, held out her hand, saying, as she did so, "Ysidro?"

Pleased, yet surprised, at this confident and assured greeting, Ysidro saluted her, and turning to Alessandro, said in their own tongue, "Who is this woman whom you bring, that has heard my name?"

"My wife!" answered Alessandro, in the same tongue. "We were married last night by Father Gaspara. She comes from the house of the Señora Moreno. We will live in San Pasquale, if you have land for me, as you have said."

Whatever astonishment Ysidro felt, he showed none. Only a grave and courteous welcome was in his face and in his words as he said, "It is well. There is

room. You are welcome." But when he heard the soft Spanish syllables in which Ramona spoke to Alessandro, and Alessandro, translating her words to him, said, "Majel speaks only in the Spanish tongue, but she will learn ours," a look of disquiet passed over his countenance. His heart feared for Alessandro, and he said, "Is she, then, not Indian? Whence got she the name of Majel?"

A look of swift intelligence from Alessandro reassured him. "Indian on the mother's side!" said Alessandro, "and she belongs in heart to our people. She is alone, save for me. She is one blessed of the Virgin, Ysidro. She will help us. The name Majel I have given her, for she is like the wood-dove; and she is glad to lay her old name down forever, to bear this new name in our tongue."

And this was Ramona's introduction to the Indian village, — this and her smile; perhaps the smile did most. Even the little children were not afraid of her. The women, though shy, in the beginning, at sight of her noble bearing, and her clothes of a kind and quality they associated only with superiors, soon felt her friendliness, and, what was more, saw by her every word, tone, look, that she was Alessandro's. If Alessandro's, theirs. She was one of them. Ramona would have been profoundly impressed and touched, could she have heard them speaking among themselves about her; wondering how it had come about that she, so beautiful, and nurtured in the Moreno house, of which they all knew, should be Alessandro's

loving wife. It must be, they thought in their simplicity, that the saints had sent it as an omen of good to the Indian people. Towards night they came, bringing in a hand-barrow the most aged woman in the village to look at her. She wished to see the beautiful stranger before the sun went down, they said, because she was now so old she believed each night that before morning her time would come to die. They also wished to hear the old woman's verdict on her. When Alessandro saw them coming, he understood, and made haste to explain it to Ramona. While he was yet speaking, the procession arrived, and the aged woman in her strange litter was placed silently on the ground in front of Ramona, who was sitting under Ysidro's great fig-tree. Those who had borne her withdrew, and seated themselves a few paces off. Alessandro spoke first. In a few words he told the old woman of Ramona's birth, of their marriage, and of her new name of adoption; then he said, "Take her hand, dear Majella, if you feel no fear."

There was something scarcely human in the shrivelled arm and hand outstretched in greeting; but Ramona took it in hers with tender reverence: "Say to her for me, Alessandro," she said, "that I bow down to her great age with reverence, and that I hope, if it is the will of God that I live on the earth so long as she has, I may be worthy of such reverence as these people all feel for her."

Alessandro turned a grateful look on Ramona as

H. Sandham

he translated this speech, so in unison with Indian modes of thought and feeling. A murmur of pleasure rose from the group of women sitting by. The aged woman made no reply; her eyes still studied Ramona's face, and she still held her hand.

"Tell her," continued Ramona, "that I ask if there is anything I can do for her. Say I will be her daughter if she will let me."

"It must be the Virgin herself that is teaching Majella what to say," thought Alessandro, as he repeated this in the San Luiseno tongue.

Again the women murmured pleasure, but the old woman spoke not. "And say that you will be her son," added Ramona.

Alessandro said it. It was perhaps for this that the old woman had waited. Lifting up her arm, like a sibyl, she said: "It is well; I am your mother. The winds of the valley shall love you, and the grass shall dance when you come. The daughter looks on her mother's face each day. I will go;" and making a sign to her bearers, she was lifted, and carried to her house.

The scene affected Ramona deeply. The simplest acts of these people seemed to her marvellously profound in their meanings. She was not herself sufficiently educated or versed in life to know why she was so moved, — to know that such utterances, such symbolisms as these, among primitive peoples, are thus impressive because they are truly and grandly dramatic; but she was none the less

stirred by them, because she could not analyze or explain them.

"I will go and see her every day," she said; "she shall be like my mother, whom I never saw."

"We must both go each day," said Alessandro. "What we have said is a solemn promise among my people; it would not be possible to break it."

Ysidro's home was in the centre of the village, on a slightly rising ground; it was a picturesque group of four small houses, three of tule reeds and one of adobe, — the latter a comfortable little house of two rooms, with a floor and a shingled roof, both luxuries in San Pasquale. The great fig-tree, whose luxuriance and size were noted far and near throughout the country, stood half-way down the slope; but its boughs shaded all three of the tule houses. On one of its lower branches was fastened a dove-cote, ingeniously made of willow wands, plastered with adobe, and containing so many rooms that the whole tree seemed sometimes a-flutter with doves and dovelings. Here and there, between the houses, were huge baskets, larger than barrels, woven of twigs, as the eagle weaves its nest, only tighter and thicker. These were the outdoor granaries; in these were kept acorns, barley, wheat, and corn. Ramona thought them, as well she might, the prettiest things she ever saw.

"Are they hard to make?" she asked. "Can you make them, Alessandro? I shall want many."

"All you want, my Majella," replied Alessandro.

"We will go together to get the twigs; I can, I dare say, buy some in the village. It is only two days to make a large one."

"No. Do not buy one," she exclaimed. "I wish everything in our house to be made by ourselves." In which, again, Ramona was unconsciously striking one of the keynotes of pleasure in the primitive harmonies of existence.

The tule house which stood nearest to the dove-cote was, by a lucky chance, now empty, Ysidro's brother Ramon, who had occupied it, having gone with his wife and baby to San Bernardino, for the winter, to work; this house Ysidro was but too happy to give to Alessandro till his own should be done. It was a tiny place, though it was really two houses joined together by a roofed passage-way. In this passage-way the tidy Juana, Ramon's wife, kept her few pots and pans, and a small stove. It looked to Ramona like a baby-house. Timidly Alessandro said: "Can Majella live in this small place for a time? It will not be very long; there are adobes already made."

His countenance cleared as Ramona replied gleefully, "I think it will be very comfortable, and I shall feel as if we were all doves together in the dove-cote!"

"Majel!" exclaimed Alessandro; and that was all he said.

Only a few rods off stood the little chapel; in front of it swung on a cross-bar from two slanting

posts an old bronze bell which had once belonged to the San Diego Mission. When Ramona read the date, "1790," on its side, and heard that it was from the San Diego Mission church it had come, she felt a sense of protection in its presence.

"Think, Alessandro," she said; "this bell, no doubt, has rung many times for the mass for the holy Father Junipero himself. It is a blessing to the village. I want to live where I can see it all the time. It will be like a saint's statue in the house."

With every allusion that Ramona made to the saints' statues, Alessandro's desire to procure one for her deepened. He said nothing; but he revolved it in his mind continually. He had once gone with his shearers to San Fernando, and there he had seen in a room of the old Mission buildings a dozen statues of saints huddled in dusty confusion. The San Fernando church was in crumbled ruins, and such of the church properties as were left there were in the keeping of a Mexican not over-careful, and not in the least devout. It would not trouble him to part with a saint or two, Alessandro thought, and no irreverence to the saint either; on the contrary, the greatest of reverence, since the statue was to be taken from a place where no one cared for it, and brought into one where it would be tenderly cherished, and worshipped every day. If only San Fernando were not so far away, and the wooden saints so heavy! However, it should come about yet. Majella should have a saint; nor distance nor difficulty should keep

Alessandro from procuring for his Majel the few things that lay within his power. But he held his peace about it. It would be a sweeter gift, if she did not know it beforehand. He pleased himself as subtly and secretly as if he had come of civilized generations, thinking how her eyes would dilate, if she waked up some morning and saw the saint by her bedside; and how sure she would be to think, at first, it was a miracle, — his dear, devout Majella, who, with all her superior knowledge, was yet more credulous than he. All her education had not taught her to think, as he, untaught, had learned, in his solitude with nature.

Before Alessandro had been two days in San Pasquale, he had heard of a piece of good-fortune which almost passed his belief, and which startled him for once out of his usual impassive demeanor.

"You know I have a herd of cattle of your father's, and near a hundred sheep?" said Ysidro.

"Holy Virgin!" cried Alessandro, "you do not mean that! How is that? They told me all our stock was taken by the Americans."

"Yes, so it was, all that was in Temecula," replied Ysidro; "but in the spring your father sent down to know if I would take a herd for him up into the mountains, with ours, as he feared the Temecula pasture would fall short, and the people there, who could not leave, must have their cattle near home; so he sent a herd over, — I think, near fifty head; and many of the cows have calved; and he sent,

also, a little flock of sheep, — a hundred, Ramon said; he herded them with ours all summer, and he left a man up there with them. They will be down next week. It is time they were sheared."

Before he had finished speaking, Alessandro had vanished, bounding like a deer. Ysidro stared after him; but seeing him enter the doorway of the little tule hut, he understood, and a sad smile passed over his face. He was not yet persuaded that this marriage of Alessandro's would turn out a blessing. "What are a handful of sheep to her!" he thought.

Breathless, panting, Alessandro burst into Ramona's presence. "Majella! my Majella! There are cattle — and sheep," he cried. "The saints be praised! We are not like the beggars, as I said."

"I told you that God would give us food, dear Alessandro," replied Ramona, gently.

"You do not wonder! You do not ask!" he cried, astonished at her calm. "Does Majella think that a sheep or a steer can come down from the skies?"

"Nay, not as our eyes would see," she answered; "but the holy ones who live in the skies can do anything they like on the earth. Whence came these cattle, and how are they ours?"

When he told her, her face grew solemn. "Do you remember that night in the willows," she said, "when I was like one dying, because you would not bring me with you? You had no faith that there would be food. And I told you then that the saints

never forsook those who loved them, and that God would give food. And even at that moment, when you did not know it, there were your cattle and your sheep feeding in the mountains, in the keeping of God! Will my Alessandro believe after this?" and she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"It is true," said Alessandro. "I will believe, after this, that the saints love my Majella."

But as he walked at a slower pace back to Ysidro, he said to himself: "Majella did not see Temecula. What would she have said about the saints, if she had seen that, and seen the people dying for want of food? It is only for her that the saints pray. They are displeased with my people."

XX

ONE year, and a half of another year, had passed. Sheep-shearings and vintages had been in San Pasquale; and Alessandro's new house, having been beaten on by the heavy spring rains, looked no longer new. It stood on the south side of the valley, — too far, Ramona felt, from the blessed bell; but there had not been land enough for wheat-fields any nearer, and she could see the chapel, and the posts, and, on a clear day, the bell itself. The house was small. "Small to hold so much joy," she said, when Alessandro first led her to it, and said deprecatingly, "It is small, Majella, — too small;" and he recollected bitterly, as he spoke, the size of Ramona's

own room at the Señora's house. "Too small," he repeated.

"Very small to hold so much joy, my Alessandro," she laughed; "but quite large enough to hold two persons."

It looked like a palace to the San Pasquale people, after Ramona had arranged their little possessions in it; and she herself felt rich as she looked around her two small rooms. The old San Luis Rey chairs and the raw-hide bedstead were there, and, most precious of all, the statuette of the Madonna. For this Alessandro had built a niche in the wall, between the head of the bed and the one window. The niche was deep enough to hold small pots in front of the statuette; and Ramona kept constantly growing there wild-cucumber plants, which wreathed and re-wreathed the niche till it looked like a bower. Below it hung her gold rosary and the ivory Christ; and many a woman of the village, when she came to see Ramona, asked permission to go into the bedroom and say her prayers there; so that it finally came to be a sort of shrine for the whole village.

A broad veranda, as broad as the Señora's, ran across the front of the little house. This was the only thing for which Ramona had asked. She could not quite fancy life without a veranda, and linnets in the thatch. But the linnets had not yet come. In vain Ramona strewed food for them, and laid little trains of crumbs to lure them inside the posts; they would not build nests inside. It was not their

way in San Pasquale. They lived in the cañons, but this part of the valley was too bare of trees for them. "In a year or two more, when we have orchards, they will come," Alessandro said.

With the money from that first sheep-shearing, and from the sale of part of his cattle, Alessandro had bought all he needed in the way of farming implements, — a good wagon and harnesses, and a plough. Baba and Benito, at first restive and indignant, soon made up their minds to work. Ramona had talked to Baba about it as she would have talked to a brother. In fact, except for Ramona's help, it would have been a question whether even Alessandro could have made Baba work in harness. "Good Baba!" Ramona said, as she slipped piece after piece of the harness over his neck, — "Good Baba, you must help us; we have so much work to do, and you are so strong! Good Baba, do you love me?" and with one hand in his mane, and her cheek, every few steps, laid close to his, she led Baba up and down the first furrows he ploughed.

"My Señorita!" thought Alessandro to himself, half in pain, half in pride, as, running behind with the unevenly jerked plough, he watched her laughing face and blowing hair, — "my Señorita!"

But Ramona would not run with her hand in Baba's mane this winter. There was a new work for her, indoors. In a rustic cradle, which Alessandro had made, under her directions, of the woven twigs, like the great outdoor acorn-granaries, only

closer woven, and of an oval shape, and lifted from the floor by four uprights of red manzanita stems, — in this cradle, on soft white wool fleeces, covered with white homespun blankets, lay Ramona's baby, six months old, lusty, strong, and beautiful, as only children born of great love and under healthful conditions can be. This child was a girl, to Alessandro's delight; to Ramona's regret, — so far as a loving mother can feel regret connected with her first-born. Ramona had wished for an Alessandro; but the disappointed wish faded out of her thoughts, hour by hour, as she gazed into her baby-girl's blue eyes, — eyes so blue that their color was the first thing noticed by each person who looked at her.

"Eyes of the sky," exclaimed Ysidro, when he first saw her.

"Like the mother's," said Alessandro; on which Ysidro turned an astonished look upon Ramona, and saw for the first time that her eyes, too, were blue.

"Wonderful!" he said. "It is so. I never saw it;" and he wondered in his heart what father it had been, who had given eyes like those to one born of an Indian mother.

"Eyes of the sky," became at once the baby's name in the village; and Alessandro and Ramona, before they knew it, had fallen into the way of so calling her. But when it came to the christening, they demurred. The news was brought to the village, one Saturday, that Father Gaspara would hold

services in the valley the next day, and that he wished all the new-born babes to be brought for christening. Late into the night, Alessandro and Ramona sat by their sleeping baby and discussed what should be her name. Ramona wondered that Alessandro did not wish to name her Majella.

"No! Never but one Majella," he said, in a tone which gave Ramona a sense of vague fear, it was so solemn.

They discussed "Ramona," "Isabella." Alessandro suggested Carmena. This had been his mother's name.

At the mention of it Ramona shuddered, recollecting the scene in the Temecula graveyard. "Oh, no, no! Not that!" she cried. "It is ill-fated;" and Alessandro blamed himself for having forgotten her only association with the name.

At last Alessandro said: "The people have named her, I think, Majella. Whatever name we give her in the chapel, she will never be called anything but 'Eyes of the Sky,' in the village."

"Let that name be her true one, then," said Ramona. And so it was settled; and when Father Gaspara took the little one in his arms, and made the sign of the cross on her brow, he pronounced with some difficulty the syllables of the Indian name, which meant "Blue Eyes," or "Eyes of the Sky."

Heretofore, when Father Gaspara had come to San Pasquale to say mass, he had slept at Lomax's, the

store and post-office, six miles away, in the Bernardo valley. But Ysidro, with great pride, had this time ridden to meet him, to say that his cousin Alessandro, who had come to live in the valley, and had a good new adobe house, begged that the Father would do him the honor to stay with him.

"And indeed, Father," added Ysidro, "you will be far better lodged and fed than in the house of Lomax. My cousin's wife knows well how all should be done."

"Alessandro! Alessandro!" said the Father, musingly. "Has he been long married?"

"No, Father," answered Ysidro. "But little more than two years. They were married by you, on their way from Temecula here."

"Ay, ay! I remember," said Father Gaspara. "I will come;" and it was with no small interest that he looked forward to meeting again the couple that had so strongly impressed him.

Ramona was full of eager interest in her preparations for entertaining the priest. This was like the olden time; and as she busied herself with her cooking and other arrangements, the thought of Father Salvierderra was much in her mind. She could, perhaps, hear news of him from Father Gaspara. It was she who had suggested the idea to Alessandro; and when he said, "But where will you sleep yourself, with the child, Majella, if we give our room to the Father? I can lie on the floor outside; but you?"—"I will go to Ysidro's, and sleep with

Juana," she replied. "For two nights, it is no matter; and it is such shame to have the Father sleep in the house of an American, when we have a good bed like this!"

Seldom in his life had Alessandro experienced such a sense of gratification as he did when he led Father Gaspara into his and Ramona's bedroom. The clean whitewashed walls, the bed neatly made, with broad lace on sheets and pillows, hung with curtains and a canopy of bright red calico, the old carved chairs, the Madonna shrine in its bower of green leaves, the shelves on the walls, the white-curtained window, — all made up a picture such as Father Gaspara had never before seen in his pilgrimages among the Indian villages. He could not restrain an ejaculation of surprise. Then his eye falling on the golden rosary, he exclaimed, "Where got you that?"

"It is my wife's," replied Alessandro, proudly. "It was given to her by Father Salvierderra."

"Ah!" said the Father. "He died the other day."

"Dead! Father Salvierderra dead!" cried Alessandro. "That will be a terrible blow. Oh, Father, I implore you not to speak of it in her presence. She must not know it till after the christening. It will make her heart heavy, so that she will have no joy."

Father Gaspara was still scrutinizing the rosary and crucifix. "To be sure, to be sure," he said ab-

sently; "I will say nothing of it; but this is a work of art, this crucifix; do you know what you have here? And this, — is this not an altar-cloth?" he added, lifting up the beautiful wrought altar-cloth, which Ramona, in honor of his coming, had pinned on the wall below the Madonna's shrine.

"Yes, Father, it was made for that. My wife made it. It was to be a present to Father Salvierderra; but she has not seen him, to give it to him. It will take the light out of the sun for her, when first she hears that he is dead."

Father Gaspara was about to ask another question, when Ramona appeared in the doorway, flushed with running. She had carried the baby over to Juana's and left her there, that she might be free to serve the Father's supper.

"I pray you tell her not," said Alessandro, under his breath; but it was too late. Seeing the Father with her rosary in his hand, Ramona exclaimed: —

"That, Father, is my most sacred possession. It once belonged to Father Peyri, of San Luis Rey, and he gave it to Father Salvierderra, who gave it to me. Know you Father Salvierderra? I was hoping to hear news of him through you."

"Yes, I knew him, — not very well; it is long since I saw him," stammered Father Gaspara. His hesitancy alone would not have told Ramona the truth; she would have set that down to the secular priest's indifference, or hostility, to the Franciscan order; but looking at Alessandro, she saw terror and

sadness on his face. No shadow there ever escaped her eye. "What is it, Alessandro?" she exclaimed. "Is it something about Father Salvierderra? Is he ill?"

Alessandro shook his head. He did not know what to say. Looking from one to the other, seeing the confused pain in both their faces, Ramona, laying both her hands on her breast, in the expressive gesture she had learned from the Indian women, cried out in a piteous tone: "You will not tell me! You do not speak! Then he is dead!" and she sank on her knees.

"Yes, my daughter, he is dead," said Father Gaspara, more tenderly than that brusque and warlike priest often spoke. "He died a month ago, at Santa Barbara. I am grieved to have brought you tidings to give you such sorrow. But you must not mourn for him. He was very feeble, and he longed to die, I heard. He could no longer work, and he did not wish to live."

Ramona had buried her face in her hands. The Father's words were only a confused sound in her ears. She had heard nothing after the words, "a month ago." She remained silent and motionless for some moments; then rising, without speaking a word, or looking at either of the men, she crossed the room and knelt down before the Madonna. By a common impulse, both Alessandro and Father Gaspara silently left the room. As they stood together outside the door, the Father said, "I would

go back to Lomax's if it were not so late. I like not to be here when your wife is in such grief."

"That would but be another grief, Father," said Alessandro. "She has been full of happiness in making ready for you. She is very strong of soul. It is she who makes me strong often, and not I who give strength to her."

"My faith, but the man is right," thought Father Gaspara, a half-hour later, when, with a calm face, Ramona summoned them to supper. He did not know, as Alessandro did, how that face had changed in the half-hour. It wore a look Alessandro had never seen upon it. Almost he dreaded to speak to her.

When he walked by her side, later in the evening, as she went across the valley to Fernando's house, he ventured to mention Father Salvierderra's name. Ramona laid her hand on his lips. "I cannot talk about him yet, dear," she said. "I never believed that he would die without giving us his blessing. Do not speak of him till to-morrow is over."

Ramona's saddened face smote on all the women's hearts as they met her the next morning. One by one they gazed, astonished, then turned away, and spoke softly among themselves. They all loved her, and half revered her too, for her great kindness, and readiness to teach and to help them. She had been like a sort of missionary in the valley ever since she came, and no one had ever seen her face without a smile. Now she smiled not. Yet there was the

beautiful baby in its white dress, ready to be christened; and the sun shone, and the bell had been ringing for half an hour, and from every corner of the valley the people were gathering, and Father Gaspara, in his gold and green cassock, was praying before the altar; it was a joyous day in San Pasquale. Why did Alessandro and Ramona kneel apart in a corner, with such heart-stricken countenances, not even looking glad when their baby laughed, and reached up her hands? Gradually it was whispered about what had happened. Some one had got it from Antonio, of Temecula, Alessandro's friend. Then all the women's faces grew sad too. They all had heard of Father Salvierderra, and many of them had prayed to the ivory Christ in Ramona's room, and knew that he had given it to her.

As Ramona passed out of the chapel, some of them came up to her, and taking her hand in theirs, laid it on their hearts, speaking no word. The gesture was more than any speech could have been.

When Father Gaspara was taking leave, Ramona said, with quivering lips, "Father, if there is anything you know of Father Salvierderra's last hours, I would be grateful to you for telling me."

"I heard very little," replied the Father, "except that he had been feeble for some weeks; yet he would persist in spending most of the night kneeling on the stone floor in the church, praying."

"Yes," interrupted Ramona; "that he always did."

"And the last morning," continued the Father, "the Brothers found him there, still kneeling on the stone floor, but quite powerless to move; and they lifted him, and carried him to his room, and there they found, to their horror, that he had had no bed; he had lain on the stones; and then they took him to the Superior's own room, and laid him in the bed, and he did not speak any more, and at noon he died."

"Thank you very much, Father," said Ramona, without lifting her eyes from the ground; and in the same low, tremulous tone, "I am glad that I know that he is dead."

"Strange what a hold those Franciscans got on these Indians!" mused Father Gaspara, as he rode down the valley. "There 's none of them would look like that if I were dead, I warrant me! There," he exclaimed, "I meant to have asked Alessandro who this wife of his is! I don't believe she is a Temecula Indian. Next time I come, I will find out. She 's had some schooling somewhere, that 's plain. She 's quite superior to the general run of them. Next time I come, I will find out about her."

"Next time!" In what calendar are kept the records of those next times which never come? Long before Father Gaspara visited San Pasquale again, Alessandro and Ramona were far away, and strangers were living in their home.

It seemed to Ramona in after years, as she looked back over this life, that the news of Father Salvier-

derra's death was the first note of the knell of their happiness. It was but a few days afterward, when Alessandro came in one noon with an expression on his face that terrified her; seating himself in a chair, he buried his face in his hands, and would neither look up nor speak; not until Ramona was near crying from his silence, did he utter a word. Then, looking at her with a ghastly face, he said in a hollow voice, "It has begun!" and buried his face again. Finally Ramona's tears wrung from him the following story:

Ysidro, it seemed, had the previous year rented a cañon, at the head of the valley, to one Doctor Morong. It was simply as bee-pasture that the Doctor wanted it, he said. He put his hives there, and built a sort of hut for the man whom he sent up to look after the honey. Ysidro did not need the land, and thought it a good chance to make a little money. He had taken every precaution to make the transaction a safe one; had gone to San Diego, and got Father Gaspara to act as interpreter for him, in the interview with Morong; it had been a written agreement, and the rent agreed upon had been punctually paid. Now, the time of the lease having expired, Ysidro had been to San Diego to ask the Doctor if he wished to renew it for another year; and the Doctor had said that the land was his, and he was coming out there to build a house, and live.

Ysidro had gone to Father Gaspara for help, and Father Gaspara had had an angry interview with

Doctor Morong; but it had done no good. The Doctor said the land did not belong to Ysidro at all, but to the United States Government; and that he had paid the money for it to the agents in Los Angeles, and there would very soon come papers from Washington, to show that it was his. Father Gaspara had gone with Ysidro to a lawyer in San Diego, and had shown to this lawyer Ysidro's paper, — the old one from the Mexican Governor of California, establishing the pueblo of San Pasquale, and saying how many leagues of land the Indians were to have; but the lawyer had only laughed at Father Gaspara for believing that such a paper as that was good for anything. He said that was all very well when the country belonged to Mexico, but it was no good now; that the Americans owned it now; and everything was done by the American law now, not by the Mexican law any more.

"Then we do not own any land in San Pasquale at all," said Ysidro. "Is that what it means?"

And the lawyer had said, he did not know how it would be with the cultivated land, and the village where the houses were, — he could not tell about that; but he thought it all belonged to the men at Washington.

Father Gaspara was in such rage, Ysidro said, that he tore open his gown on his breast, and he smote himself, and he said he wished he were a soldier, and no priest, that he might fight this accursed United States Government; and the lawyer laughed at him,

and told him to look after souls, — that was his business, — and let the Indian beggars alone! "Yes, that was what he said, — 'the Indian beggars!' and so they would be all beggars, presently."

Alessandro told this by gasps, as it were; at long intervals. His voice was choked; his whole frame shook. He was nearly beside himself with rage and despair.

"You see, it is as I said, Majella. There is no place safe. We can do nothing! We might better be dead!"

"It is a long way off, that cañon Doctor Morong had," said Ramona, piteously. "It would n't do any harm, his living there, if no more came."

"Majella talks like a dove, and not like a woman," said Alessandro, fiercely. "Will there be one to come, and not two? It is the beginning. To-morrow may come ten more, with papers to show that the land is theirs. We can do nothing, any more than the wild beasts. They are better than we."

From this day Alessandro was a changed man. Hope had died in his bosom. In all the village councils, — and they were many and long now, for the little community had been plunged into great anxiety and distress by this Doctor Morong's affair, — Alessandro sat dumb and gloomy. To whatever was proposed, he had but one reply: "It is of no use. We can do nothing."

"Eat your dinners to-day, to-morrow we starve," he said one night, bitterly, as the council broke up.

When Ysidro proposed to him that they should journey to Los Angeles, where Father Gaspara had said the headquarters of the Government officers were, and where they could learn all about the new laws in regard to land, Alessandro laughed at him. "What more is it, then, which you wish to know, my brother, about the American laws?" he said. "Is it not enough that you know they have made a law which will take the land from Indians; from us who have owned it longer than any can remember; land that our ancestors are buried in, — will take that land and give it to themselves, and say it is theirs? Is it to hear this again said in your face, and to see the man laugh who says it, like the lawyer in San Diego, that you will journey to Los Angeles? I will not go!"

And Ysidro went alone. Father Gaspara gave him a letter to the Los Angeles priest, who went with him to the land-office, patiently interpreted for him all he had to say, and as patiently interpreted all that the officials had to say in reply. They did not laugh, as Alessandro in his bitterness had said. They were not inhuman, and they felt sincere sympathy for this man, representative of two hundred hard-working, industrious people, in danger of being turned out of house and home. But they were very busy; they had to say curtly, and in few words, all there was to be said: the San Pasquale district was certainly the property of the United States Government, and the lands were in market, to be filed on, and bought,

according to the homestead laws. These officials had neither authority nor option in the matter. They were there simply to carry out instructions, and obey orders.

Ysidro understood the substance of all this, though the details were beyond his comprehension. But he did not regret having taken the journey; he had now made his last effort for his people. The Los Angeles priest had promised that he would himself write a letter to Washington, to lay the case before the head men there, and perhaps something would be done for their relief. It seemed incredible to Ysidro, as, riding along day after day, on his sad homeward journey, he reflected on the subject, — it seemed incredible to him that the Government would permit such a village as theirs to be destroyed. He reached home just at sunset; and looking down, as Alessandro and Ramona had done on the morning of their arrival, from the hill-crests at the west end of the valley, seeing the broad belt of cultivated fields and orchards, the peaceful little hamlet of houses, he groaned. "If the people who make these laws could only see this village, they would never turn us out, never! They can't know what is being done. I am sure they can't know."

"What did I tell you?" cried Alessandro, galloping up on Benito, and reining him in so sharply he reared and plunged. "What did I tell you? I saw by your face, many paces back, that you had come as you went, or worse! I have been watch-

ing for you these two days. Another American has come in with Morong in the cañon; they are making corrals; they will keep stock. You will see how long we have any pasture-lands in that end of the valley. I drive all my stock to San Diego next week. I will sell it for what it will bring, — both the cattle and the sheep. It is no use. You will see."

When Ysidro began to recount his interview with the land-office authorities, Alessandro broke in fiercely: "I wish to hear no more of it. Their names and their speech are like smoke in my eyes and my nose. I think I shall go mad, Ysidro. Go tell your story to the men who are waiting to hear it, and who yet believe that an American may speak truth!"

Alessandro was as good as his word. The very next week he drove all his cattle and sheep to San Diego, and sold them at great loss. "It is better than nothing," he said. "They will not now be sold by the sheriff, like my father's in Temecula." The money he got, he took to Father Gaspara. "Father," he said huskily, "I have sold all my stock. I would not wait for the Americans to sell it for me, and take the money. I have not got much, but it is better than nothing. It will make that we do not starve for one year. Will you keep it for me, Father? I dare not have it in San Pasquale. San Pasquale will be like Temecula, — it may be to-morrow."

To the Father's suggestion that he should put the money in a bank in San Diego, Alessandro cried: "Sooner would I throw it in the sea yonder! I trust no man, henceforth; only the Church I will trust. Keep it for me, Father, I pray you;" and the Father could not refuse his imploring tone.

"What are your plans now?" he asked.

"Plans!" repeated Alessandro, — "plans, Father! Why should I make plans? I will stay in my house so long as the Americans will let me. You saw our little house, Father!" His voice broke as he said this. "I have large wheat-fields; if I can get one more crop off them, it will be something; but my land is of the richest in the valley, and as soon as the Americans see it, they will want it. Farewell, Father. I thank you for keeping my money, and for all you said to the thief Morong. Ysidro told me. Farewell." And he was gone, and out of sight on the swift galloping Benito, before Father Gaspara bethought himself.

"And I remembered not to ask who his wife was. I will look back at the record," said the Father. Taking down the old volume, he ran his eye back over the year. Marriages were not so many in Father Gaspara's parish, that the list took long to read. The entry of Alessandro's marriage was blotted. The Father had been in haste that night. "Alessandro Assis. Majella Fa—" No more could be read. The name meant nothing to Father Gaspara. "Clearly an Indian name," he said

to himself; "yet she seemed superior in every way. I wonder where she got it."

The winter wore along quietly in San Pasquale. The delicious soft rains set in early, promising a good grain year. It seemed a pity not to get in as much wheat as possible; and all the San Pasquale people went early to ploughing new fields, — all but Alessandro.

"If I reap all I have, I will thank the saints," he said. "I will plough no more land for the robbers." But after his fields were all planted, and the beneficent rains still kept on, and the hills all along the valley wall began to turn green earlier than ever before was known, he said to Ramona one morning, "I think I will make one more field of wheat. There will be a great yield this year. Maybe we will be left unmolested till the harvest is over."

"Oh, yes, and for many more harvests, dear Alessandro!" said Ramona, cheerily. "You are always looking on the black side."

"There is no other but the black side, Majella," he replied. "Strain my eyes as I may, on all sides all is black. You will see. Never any more harvests in San Pasquale for us, after this. If we get this, we are lucky. I have seen the white men riding up and down in the valley, and I found some of their cursed bits of wood with figures on them set up on my land the other day; and I pulled them up and burned them to ashes. But I will plough one more field this week; though, I know not why

it is, my thoughts go against it even now. But I will do it; and I will not come home till night, Majella, for the field is too far to go and come twice. I shall be the whole day ploughing." So saying, he stooped and kissed the baby, and then kissing Ramona, went out.

Ramona stood at the door and watched him as he harnessed Benito and Baba to the plough. He did not once look back at her; his face seemed full of thought, his hands acting as it were mechanically. After he had gone a few rods from the house, he stopped, stood still for some minutes meditating, then went on irresolutely, halted again, but finally went on, and disappeared from sight among the low foot-hills to the east. Sighing deeply, Ramona turned back to her work. But her heart was too disquieted. She could not keep back the tears.

"How changed is Alessandro!" she thought. "It terrifies me to see him thus. I will tell the Blessed Virgin about it;" and kneeling before the shrine, she prayed fervently and long. She rose comforted, and drawing the baby's cradle out into the veranda, seated herself at her embroidery. Her skill with her needle had proved a not inconsiderable source of income, her fine lace-work being always taken by San Diego merchants, and at fairly good prices.

It seemed to her only a short time that she had been sitting thus, when, glancing up at the sun, she saw it was near noon; at the same moment she saw

Alessandro approaching, with the horses. In dismay, she thought, "There is no dinner! He said he would not come!" and springing up, was about to run to meet him, when she observed that he was not alone. A short, thick-set man was walking by his side; they were talking earnestly. It was a white man. What did it bode? Presently they stopped. She saw Alessandro lift his hand and point to the house, then to the tule sheds in the rear. He seemed to be talking excitedly; the white man also; they were both speaking at once. Ramona shivered with fear. Motionless she stood, straining eye and ear; she could hear nothing, but the gestures told much. Had it come, — the thing Alessandro had said would come? Were they to be driven out, — driven out this very day, when the Virgin had only just now seemed to promise her help and protection?

The baby stirred, waked, began to cry. Catching the child up to her breast, she stilled her by convulsive caresses. Clasping her tight in her arms, she walked a few steps towards Alessandro, who, seeing her, made an imperative gesture to her to return. Sick at heart, she went back to the veranda and sat down to wait.

In a few moments she saw the white man counting out money into Alessandro's hand; then he turned and walked away, Alessandro still standing as if rooted to the spot, gazing into the palm of his hand, Benito and Baba slowly walking away from

him unnoticed; at last he seemed to rouse himself as from a trance, and picking up the horses' reins, came slowly towards her. Again she started to meet him; again he made the same authoritative gesture to her to return; and again she seated herself, trembling in every nerve of her body. Ramona was now sometimes afraid of Alessandro. When these fierce glooms seized him, she dreaded, she knew not what. He seemed no more the Alessandro she had loved.

Deliberately, lingeringly, he unharnessed the horses and put them in the corral. Then still more deliberately, lingeringly, he walked to the house; walked, without speaking, past Ramona, into the door. A lurid spot on each cheek showed burning red through the bronze of his skin. His eyes glittered. In silence Ramona followed him, and saw him draw from his pocket a handful of gold-pieces, fling them on the table, and burst into a laugh more terrible than any weeping, — a laugh which wrung from her instantly, involuntarily, the cry, "Oh, my Alessandro! my Alessandro! What is it? Are you mad?"

"No, my sweet Majel," he exclaimed, turning to her, and flinging his arms round her and the child together, drawing them so close to his breast that the embrace hurt, — "no, I am not mad; but I think I shall soon be! What is that gold? The price of this house, Majel, and of the fields, — of all that was ours in San Pasquale! To-morrow we

will go out into the world again. I will see if I can find a place the Americans do not want!"

It did not take many words to tell the story. Alessandro had not been ploughing more than an hour, when, hearing a strange sound, he looked up and saw a man unloading lumber a few rods off. Alessandro stopped midway in the furrow and watched him. The man also watched Alessandro. Presently he came towards him, and said roughly, "Look here! Be off, will you? This is my land. I'm going to build a house here."

Alessandro had replied, "This was my land yesterday. How comes it yours to-day?"

Something in the wording of this answer, or something in Alessandro's tone and bearing, smote the man's conscience, or heart, or what stood to him in the place of conscience and heart, and he said: "Come, now, my good fellow, you look like a reasonable kind of a fellow; you just clear out, will you, and not make me any trouble. You see the land's mine. I've got all this land round here;" and he waved his arm, describing a circle; "three hundred and twenty acres, me and my brother together, and we're coming in here to settle. We got our papers from Washington last week. It's all right, and you may just as well go peaceably, as make a fuss about it. Don't you see?"

Yes, Alessandro saw. He had been seeing this precise thing for months. Many times, in his dreams and in his waking thoughts, he had lived

over scenes similar to this. An almost preternatural calm and wisdom seemed to be given him now.

"Yes, I see, Señor," he said. "I am not surprised. I knew it would come; but I hoped it would not be till after harvest. I will not give you any trouble, Señor, because I cannot. If I could, I would. But I have heard all about the new law which gives all the Indians' lands to the Americans. We cannot help ourselves. But it is very hard, Señor." He paused.

The man, confused and embarrassed, astonished beyond expression at being met in this way by an Indian, did not find words come ready to his tongue. "Of course, I know it does seem a little rough on fellows like you, that are industrious, and have done some work on the land. But you see the land 's in the market; I 've paid my money for it."

"The Señor is going to build a house?" asked Alessandro.

"Yes," the man answered. "I've got my family in San Diego, and I want to get them settled as soon as I can. My wife won't feel comfortable till she 's in her own house. We 're from the States, and she 's been used to having everything comfortable."

"I have a wife and child, Señor," said Alessandro, still in the same calm, deliberate tone; "and we have a very good house of two rooms. It would save the Señor's building, if he would buy mine."

"How far is it?" said the man. "I can't tell

exactly where the boundaries of my land are, for the stakes we set have been pulled up."

"Yes, Señor, I pulled them up and burned them. They were on my land," replied Alessandro. "My house is farther west than your stakes; and I have large wheat-fields there, too, — many acres, Señor, all planted."

Here was a chance, indeed. The man's eyes gleamed. He would do the handsome thing. He would give this fellow something for his house and wheat-crops. First he would see the house, however; and it was for that purpose he had walked back with Alessandro. When he saw the neat whitewashed adobe, with its broad veranda, the sheds and corrals all in good order, he instantly resolved to get possession of them by fair means or foul.

"There will be three hundred dollars' worth of wheat in July, Señor, you can see for yourself; and a house so good as that, you cannot build for less than one hundred dollars. What will you give me for them?"

"I suppose I can have them without paying you for them, if I choose," said the man, insolently.

"No, Señor," replied Alessandro.

"What's to hinder, then, I'd like to know!" in a brutal sneer. "You have n't got any rights here, whatever, according to law."

"I shall hinder, Señor," replied Alessandro. "I shall burn down the sheds and corrals, tear down the

house; and before a blade of the wheat is reaped, I will burn that." Still in the same calm tone.

"What 'll you take?" said the man, sullenly.

"Two hundred dollars," replied Alessandro.

"Well, leave your plough and wagon, and I 'll give it to you," said the man; "and a big fool I am, too. Well laughed at, I 'll be, do you know it, for buying out an Indian!"

"The wagon, Señor, cost me one hundred and thirty dollars in San Diego. You cannot buy one so good for less. I will not sell it. I need it to take away my things in. The plough you may have. That is worth twenty."

"I 'll do it," said the man; and pulling out a heavy buckskin pouch, he counted out into Alessandro's hand two hundred dollars in gold.

"Is that all right?" he said, as he put down the last piece.

"That is the sum I said, Señor," replied Alessandro. "To-morrow, at noon, you can come into the house."

"Where will you go?" asked the man, again slightly touched by Alessandro's manner. "Why don't you stay round here? I expect you could get work enough; there are a lot of farmers coming in here; they 'll want hands."

A fierce torrent of words sprang to Alessandro's lips, but he choked them back. "I do not know where I shall go, but I will not stay here," he said; and that ended the interview.

"I don't know as I blame him a mite for feeling that way," thought the man from the States, as he walked slowly back to his pile of lumber. "I expect I should feel just so myself."

Almost before Alessandro had finished this tale, he began to move about the room, taking down, folding up, opening and shutting lids; his restlessness was terrible to see. "By sunrise, I would like to be off," he said. "It is like death, to be in the house which is no longer ours." Ramona had spoken no word since her first cry on hearing that terrible laugh. She was like one stricken dumb. The shock was greater to her than to Alessandro. He had lived with it ever present in his thoughts for a year. She had always hoped. But far more dreadful than the loss of her home, was the anguish of seeing, hearing, the changed face, changed voice, of Alessandro. Almost this swallowed up the other. She obeyed him mechanically, working faster and faster as he grew more and more feverish in his haste. Before sundown the little house was dismantled; everything, except the bed and the stove, packed in the big wagon.

"Now, we must cook food for the journey," said Alessandro.

"Where are we going?" said the weeping Ramona.

"Where?" ejaculated Alessandro, so scornfully that it sounded like impatience with Ramona, and made her tears flow afresh. "Where? I know not, Majella! Into the mountains, where the white men come not! At sunrise we will start."

Ramona wished to say good-by to their friends. There were women in the village that she tenderly loved. But Alessandro was unwilling. "There will be weeping and crying, Majella; I pray you do not speak to one. Why should we have more tears? Let us disappear. I will say all to Ysidro. He will tell them."

This was a sore grief to Ramona. In her heart she rebelled against it, as she had never yet rebelled against an act of Alessandro's; but she could not distress him. Was not his burden heavy enough now?

Without a word of farewell to any one, they set off in the gray dawn, before a creature was stirring in the village, — the wagon piled high; Ramona, her baby in her arms, in front; Alessandro walking. The load was heavy. Benito and Baba walked slowly. Capitan, unhappy, looking first at Ramona's face, then at Alessandro's, walked dispiritedly by their side. He knew all was wrong.

As Alessandro turned the horses into a faintly marked road leading in a northeasterly direction, Ramona said with a sob, "Where does this road lead, Alessandro?"

"To San Jacinto," he said. "San Jacinto Mountain. Do not look back, Majella! Do not look back!" he cried, as he saw Ramona, with streaming eyes, gazing back towards San Pasquale. "Do not look back! It is gone! Pray to the saints now, Majella! Pray! Pray!"

XXI

THE Señora Moreno was dying. It had been a sad two years in the Moreno house. After the first excitement following Ramona's departure had died away, things had settled down in a surface similitude of their old routine. But nothing was really the same. No one was so happy as before. Juan Canito was heart-broken. There had been set over him the very Mexican whose coming to the place he had dreaded. The sheep had not done well; there had been a drought; many had died of hunger, — a thing for which the new Mexican overseer was not to blame, though it pleased Juan to hold him so, and to say from morning till night

that if his leg had not been broken, or if the lad Alessandro had been there, the wool-crop would have been as big as ever. Not one of the servants liked this Mexican; he had a sorry time of it, poor fellow; each man and woman on the place had or fancied some reason for being set against him; some from sympathy with Juan Can, some from idleness and general impatience; Margarita, most of all, because he was not Alessandro. Margarita, between remorse about her young mistress and pique and disappointment about Alessandro, had become a very unhappy girl; and her mother, instead of comforting or soothing her, added to her misery by continually bemoaning Ramona's fate. The void that Ramona had left in the whole household seemed an irreparable one; nothing came to fill it; there was no forgetting; every day her name was mentioned by some one; mentioned with bated breath, fearful conjecture, compassion, and regret. Where had she vanished? Had she indeed gone to the convent, as she said, or had she fled with Alessandro?

Margarita would have given her right hand to know. Only Juan Can felt sure. Very well Juan Can knew that nobody but Alessandro had the wit and the power over Baba to lure him out of that corral, "and never a rail out of its place." And the saddle, too! Ay, the smart lad! He had done the best he could for the Señorita; but, Holy Virgin! what had got into the Señorita to run off like that, with an Indian, — even Alessandro! The fiends had

bewitched her. Tirelessly Juan Can questioned every traveller, every wandering herder he saw. No one knew anything of Alessandro, beyond the fact that all the Temecula Indians had been driven out of their village, and that there was now not an Indian in the valley. There was a rumor that Alessandro and his father had both died; but no one knew anything certainly. The Temecula Indians had disappeared, that was all there was of it, — disappeared, like any wild creatures, foxes or coyotes; hunted down, driven out; the valley was rid of them. But the Señorita! She was not with these fugitives. That could not be! Heaven forbid!

"If I'd my legs, I'd go and see for myself!" said Juan Can. "It would be some comfort to know even the worst. Perdition take the Señora, who drove her to it! Ay, drove her to it! That's what I say, Luigo." In some of his most venturesome wrathy moments he would say: "There's none of you know the truth about the Señorita but me! It's a hard hand the Señora's reared her with, from the first. She's a wonderful woman, our Señora! She gets power over one."

But the Señora's power was shaken now. More changed than all else in the changed Moreno household, was the relation between the Señora Moreno and her son Felipe. On the morning after Ramona's disappearance, words had been spoken by each which neither would ever forget. In fact, the Señora believed that it was of them she was dying, and

perhaps that was not far from the truth; the reason that forces could no longer rally in her to repel disease, lying no doubt largely in the fact that to live seemed no longer to her desirable.

Felipe had found the note Ramona had laid on his bed. Before it was yet dawn he had waked, and tossing uneasily under the light covering had heard the rustle of the paper, and knowing instinctively that it was from Ramona, had risen instantly to make sure of it. Before his mother opened her window, he had read it. He felt like one bereft of his senses as he read. Gone! Gone with Alessandro! Stolen away like a thief in the night, his dear, sweet little sister! Ah, what a cruel shame! Scales seemed to drop from Felipe's eyes as he lay motionless, thinking of it. A shame! a cruel shame! And he and his mother were the ones who had brought it on Ramona's head, and on the house of Moreno. Felipe felt as if he had been under a spell all along, not to have realized this. "That's what I told my mother!" he groaned, — "that it drove her to running away! Oh, my sweet Ramona! what will become of her? I will go after them, and bring them back;" and Felipe rose, and hastily dressing himself, ran down the veranda steps, to gain a little more time to think. He returned shortly, to meet his mother standing in the doorway, with pale, affrighted face.

"Felipe!" she cried, "Ramona is not here."

"I know it," he replied in an angry tone. "That is

what I told you we should do, — drive her to running away with Alessandro!"

"With Alessandro!" interrupted the Señora.

"Yes," continued Felipe, — "with Alessandro, the Indian! Perhaps you think it is less disgrace to the names of Ortegna and Moreno to have her run away with him, than to be married to him here under our roof! I do not! Curse the day, I say, when I ever lent myself to breaking the girl's heart! I am going after them, to fetch them back!"

If the skies had opened and rained fire, the Señora had hardly less quailed and wondered than she did at these words; but even for fire from the skies she would not surrender till she must.

"How know you that it is with Alessandro?" she said.

"Because she has written it here!" cried Felipe, defiantly holding up his little note. "She left this, her good-by to me. Bless her! She writes like a saint, to thank me for all my goodness to her, — I, who drove her to steal out of my house like a thief!"

The phrase, "my house," smote the Señora's ear like a note from some other sphere, which indeed it was, — from the new world into which Felipe had been in an hour born. Her cheeks flushed, and she opened her lips to reply; but before she had uttered a word, Luigo came running round the corner, Juan Can hobbling after him at a miraculous pace on his crutches. "Señor Felipe! Señor Felipe! Oh, Señora!" they cried. "Thieves have been here in

the night! Baba is gone, — Baba, and the Señorita's saddle."

A malicious smile broke over the Señora's countenance, and turning to Felipe, she said in a tone — what a tone it was! Felipe felt as if he must put his hands to his ears to shut it out; Felipe would never forget, — "As you were saying, like a thief in the night!"

With a swifter and more energetic movement than any had ever before seen Señor Felipe make, he stepped forward, saying in an undertone to his mother, "For God's sake, mother, not a word before the men! — What is that you say, Luigo? Baba gone? We must see to our corral. I will come down, after breakfast, and look at it;" and turning his back on them, he drew his mother by a firm grasp, she could not resist, into the house.

She gazed at him in sheer, dumb wonder.

"Ay, mother," he said, "you may well look thus in wonder; I have been no man, to let my foster-sister, I care not what blood were in her veins, be driven to this pass! I will set out this day, and bring her back."

"The day you do that, then, I lie in this house dead!" retorted the Señora, at white heat. "You may rear as many Indian families as you please under the Moreno roof, I will at least have my grave!" In spite of her anger, grief convulsed her; and in another second she had burst into tears, and sunk helpless and trembling into a chair. No coun-

terfeiting now. No pretences. The Señora Moreno's heart broke within her, when those words passed her lips to her adored Felipe. At the sight, Felipe flung himself on his knees before her; he kissed the aged hands as they lay trembling in her lap. "Mother mia," he cried, "you will break my heart if you speak like that! Oh, why, why do you command me to do what a man may not? I would die for you, my mother; but how can I see my sister a homeless wanderer in the wilderness?"

"I suppose the man Alessandro has something he calls a home," said the Señora, regaining herself a little. "Had they no plans? Spoke she not in her letter of what they would do?"

"Only that they would go to Father Salvierderra first," he replied.

"Ah!" The Señora reflected. At first startled, her second thought was that this would be the best possible thing which could happen.

"Father Salvierderra will counsel them what to do," she said. "He could no doubt establish them in Santa Barbara in some way. My son, when you reflect, you will see the impossibility of bringing them here. Help them in any way you like, but do not bring them here." She paused. "Not until I am dead, Felipe! It will not be long."

Felipe bowed his head in his mother's lap. She laid her hands on his hair, and stroked it with passionate tenderness. "My Felipe!" she said. "It was a cruel fate to rob me of you at the last!"

"Mother! mother!" he cried in anguish. "I am yours, — wholly, devotedly yours! Why do you torture me thus?"

"I will not torture you more," she said wearily, in a feeble tone. "I ask only one thing of you; let me never hear again the name of that wretched girl, who has brought all this woe on our house; let her name never be spoken on this place by man, woman, or child. Like a thief in the night! Ay, a horse-thief!"

Felipe sprang to his feet.

"Mother!" he said, "Baba was Ramona's own; I myself gave him to her as soon as he was born!"

The Señora made no reply. She had fainted. Calling the maids, in terror and sorrow Felipe bore her to her bed, and she did not leave it for many days. She seemed hovering between life and death. Felipe watched over her as a lover might; her great mournful eyes followed his every motion. She spoke little, partly because of physical weakness, partly from despair. The Señora had got her death-blow. She would die hard. It would take long. Yet she was dying, and she knew it.

Felipe did not know it. When he saw her going about again, with a step only a little slower than before, and with a countenance not so much changed as he had feared, he thought she would be well again, after a time. And now he would go in search of Ramona. How he hoped he should find them in Santa Barbara! He must leave them there, or wher-

ever he should find them; never again would he for a moment contemplate the possibility of bringing them home with him. But he would see them; help them, if need be. Ramona should not feel herself an outcast, so long as he lived.

When he said, agitatedly, to his mother, one night, "You are so strong now, mother, I think I will take a journey; I will not be away long, — not over a week," she understood, and with a deep sigh replied: "I am not strong; but I am as strong as I shall ever be. If the journey must be taken, it is as well done now."

How was the Señora changed!

"It must be, mother," said Felipe, "or I would not leave you. I will set off before sunrise, so I will say farewell to-night."

But in the morning, at his first step, his mother's window opened, and there she stood, wan, speechless, looking at him. "You must go, my son?" she asked at last.

"I must, mother!" and Felipe threw his arms around her, and kissed her again and again. "Dearest mother! Do smile! Can you not?"

"No, my son, I cannot. Farewell. The saints keep you. Farewell." And she turned, that she might not see him go.

Felipe rode away with a sad heart, but his purpose did not falter. Following straight down the river road to the sea, he then kept up along the coast, asking here and there, cautiously, if persons answering to the description of Alessandro and Ra-

mona had been seen. No one had seen any such persons.

When, on the night of the second day, he rode up to the Santa Barbara Mission, the first figure he saw was the venerable Father Salvierderra sitting in the corridor. As Felipe approached, the old man's face beamed with pleasure, and he came forward totteringly, leaning on a staff in each hand. "Welcome, my son!" he said. "Are all well? You find me very feeble just now; my legs are failing me sorely this autumn."

Dismay seized on Felipe at the Father's first words. He would not have spoken thus, had he seen Ramona. Barely replying to the greeting, Felipe exclaimed: "Father, I come seeking Ramona. Has she not been with you?"

Father Salvierderra's face was reply to the question. "Ramona!" he cried. "Seeking Ramona! What has befallen the blessed child?"

It was a bitter story for Felipe to tell; but he told it, sparing himself no shame. He would have suffered less in the telling, had he known how well Father Salvierderra understood his mother's character, and her almost unlimited power over all persons around her. Father Salvierderra was not shocked at the news of Ramona's attachment for Alessandro. He regretted it, but he did not think it shame, as the Señora had done. As Felipe talked with him, he perceived even more clearly how bitter and unjust his mother had been to Alessandro.

"He is a noble young man," said Father Salvierderra. "His father was one of the most trusted of Father Peyri's assistants. You must find them, Felipe. I wonder much they did not come to me. Perhaps they may yet come. When you find them, bear them my blessing, and say that I wish they would come hither. I would like to give them my blessing before I die. Felipe, I shall never leave Santa Barbara again. My time draws near."

Felipe was so full of impatience to continue his search, that he hardly listened to the Father's words. "I will not tarry," he said. "I cannot rest till I find her. I will ride back as far as Ventura to-night."

"You will send me word by a messenger, when you find them," said the Father. "God grant no harm has befallen them. I will pray for them, Felipe;" and he tottered into the church.

Felipe's thoughts, as he retraced his road, were full of bewilderment and pain. He was wholly at loss to conjecture what course Alessandro and Ramona had taken, or what could have led them to abandon their intention of going to Father Salvierderra. Temecula seemed the only place, now, to look for them; and yet from Temecula Felipe had heard, only a few days before leaving home, that there was not an Indian left in the valley. But he could at least learn there where the Indians had gone. Poor as the clew seemed, it was all he had. Cruelly Felipe urged his horse on his return journey. He grudged an hour's rest to himself or to the beast;

and before he reached the head of the Temecula cañon the creature was near spent. At the steepest part he jumped off and walked, to save her strength. As he was toiling slowly up a narrow, rocky pass, he suddenly saw an Indian's head peering over the ledge. He made signs to him to come down. The Indian turned his head, and spoke to some one behind; one after another a score of figures rose. They made signs to Felipe to come up. "Poor things!" he thought; "they are afraid." He shouted to them that his horse was too tired to climb that wall; but if they would come down, he would give them money, holding up a gold-piece. They consulted among themselves; presently they began slowly descending, still halting at intervals, and looking suspiciously at him. He held up the gold again, and beckoned. As soon as they could see his face distinctly, they broke into a run. That was no enemy's face.

Only one of the number could speak Spanish. On hearing this man's reply to Felipe's first question, a woman, who had listened sharply and caught the word Alessandro, came forward, and spoke rapidly in the Indian tongue.

"This woman has seen Alessandro," said the man.

"Where?" said Felipe, breathlessly.

"In Temecula, two weeks ago," he said.

"Ask her if he had any one with him," said Felipe.

"No," said the woman. "He was alone."

A convulsion passed over Felipe's face. "Alone!" What did this mean? He reflected. The woman watched him. "Is she sure he was alone; there was no one with him?"

"Yes."

"Was he riding a big black horse?"

"No, a white horse," answered the woman, promptly. "A small white horse."

It was Carmena, every nerve of her loyal nature on the alert to baffle this pursuer of Alessandro and Ramona. Again Felipe reflected. "Ask her if she saw him for any length of time; how long she saw him."

"All night," he answered. "He spent the night where she did."

Felipe despaired. "Does she know where he is now?" he asked.

"He was going to San Luis Obispo, to go in a ship to Monterey."

"What to do?"

"She does not know."

"Did he say when he would come back?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Never! He said he would never set foot in Temecula again."

"Does she know him well?"

"As well as her own brother."

What more could Felipe ask? With a groan, wrung from the very depths of his heart, he tossed

the man a gold-piece; another to the woman. "I am sorry," he said. "Alessandro was my friend. I wanted to see him;" and he rode away, Carmena's eyes following him with a covert gleam of triumph.

When these last words of his were interpreted to her, she started, made as if she would run after him, but checked herself. "No," she thought. "It may be a lie. He may be an enemy, for all that. I will not tell. Alessandro wished not to be found. I will not tell."

And thus vanished the last chance of succor for Ramona; vanished in a moment; blown like a thistle-down on a chance breath, — the breath of a loyal, loving friend, speaking a lie to save her.

Distraught with grief, Felipe returned home. Ramona had been very ill when she left home. Had she died, and been buried by the lonely, sorrowing Alessandro? And was that the reason Alessandro was going away to the North, never to return? Fool that he was, to have shrunk from speaking Ramona's name to the Indians! He would return, and ask again. As soon as he had seen his mother, he would set off again, and never cease searching till he had found either Ramona or her grave. But when Felipe entered his mother's presence, his first look in her face told him that he would not leave her side again until he had laid her at rest in the tomb.

"Thank God! you have come, Felipe," she said in a feeble voice. "I had begun to fear you would not come in time to say farewell to me. I am going to

leave you, my son;" and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

Though she no longer wished to live, neither did she wish to die, — this poor, proud, passionate, defeated, bereft Señora. All the consolations of her religion seemed to fail her. She had prayed incessantly, but got no peace. She fixed her imploring eyes on the Virgin's face and on the saints; but all seemed to her to wear a forbidding look. "If Father Salvierderra would only come!" she groaned. "He could give me peace. If only I can live till he comes again!"

When Felipe told her of the old man's feeble state, and that he would never again make the journey, she turned her face to the wall and wept. Not only for her own soul's help did she wish to see him: she wished to put into his hands the Ortegna jewels. What would become of them? To whom should she transfer the charge? Was there a secular priest within reach that she could trust? When her sister had said, in her instructions, "the Church," she meant, as the Señora Moreno well knew, the Franciscans. The Señora dared not consult Felipe; yet she must. Day by day these fretting anxieties and perplexities wasted her strength, and her fever grew higher and higher. She asked no questions as to the result of Felipe's journey, and he dared not mention Ramona's name. At last he could bear it no longer, and one day said, "Mother, I found no trace of Ramona. I have not the least idea where she is.

The Father had not seen her or heard of her. I fear she is dead."

"Better so," was the Señora's sole reply; and she fell again into still deeper, more perplexed thought about the hidden treasure. Each day she resolved, "To-morrow I will tell Felipe;" and when to-morrow came, she put it off again. Finally she decided not to do it till she found herself dying. Father Salvierderra might yet come once more, and then all would be well. With trembling hands she wrote him a letter, imploring him to be brought to her, and sent it by messenger, who was empowered to hire a litter and four men to bring the Father gently and carefully all the way. But when the messenger reached Santa Barbara, Father Salvierderra was too feeble to be moved; too feeble even to write. He could write only by amanuensis, and wrote, therefore, guardedly, sending her his blessing, and saying that he hoped her foster-child might yet be restored to the keeping of her friends. The Father had been in sore straits of mind, as month after month had passed without tidings of his "blessed child."

Soon after this came the news that the Father was dead. This dealt the Señora a terrible blow. She never left her bed after it. And so the year had worn on; and Felipe, mourning over his sinking and failing mother, and haunted by terrible fears about the lost Ramona, had been tortured indeed.

But the end drew near, now. The Señora was plainly dying. The Ventura doctor had left off

coming, saying that he could do no more; nothing remained but to give her what ease was possible; in a day or two more all would be over. Felipe hardly left her bedside. Rarely was mother so loved and nursed by son. No daughter could have shown more tenderness and devotion. In the close relation and affection of these last days, the sense of alienation and antagonism faded from both their hearts.

"My adorable Felipe!" she would murmur. "What a son hast thou been!" And, "My beloved mother! How shall I give you up?" Felipe would reply, bowing his head on her hands, — so wasted now, so white, so weak; those hands which had been cruel and strong little more than one short year ago. Ah, no one could refuse to forgive the Señora now! The gentle Ramona, had she seen her, had wept tears of pity. Her eyes wore at times a look almost of terror. It was the secret. How should she speak it? What would Felipe say? At last the moment came. She had been with difficulty roused from a long fainting; one more such would be the last, she knew, — knew even better than those around her. As she regained consciousness, she gasped, "Felipe! Alone!"

He understood, and waved the rest away.

"Alone!" she said again, turning her eyes to the door.

"Leave the room," said Felipe; "all — wait outside;" and he closed the door on them. Even then the Señora hesitated. Almost was she ready to go

out of life leaving the hidden treasure to its chance of discovery, rather than with her own lips reveal to Felipe what she saw now, saw with the terrible, relentless clear-sightedness of death, would make him, even after she was in her grave, reproach her in his thoughts.

But she dared not withhold it. It must be said. Pointing to the statue of Saint Catharine, whose face seemed, she thought, to frown unforgiving upon her, she said, "Felipe — behind that statue — look!"

Felipe thought her delirious, and said tenderly, "Nothing is there, dearest mother. Be calm. I am here."

New terror seized the dying woman. Was she to be forced to carry the secret to the grave? to be denied this late avowal? "No! no! Felipe — there is a door there — secret door. Look! Open! I must tell you!"

Hastily Felipe moved the statue. There was indeed the door, as she had said.

"Do not tell me now, mother dear. Wait till you are stronger," he said. As he spoke, he turned, and saw, with alarm, his mother sitting upright in the bed, her right arm outstretched, her hand pointing to the door, her eyes in a glassy stare, her face convulsed. Before a cry could pass his lips, she had fallen back. The Señora Moreno was dead.

At Felipe's cry, the women waiting in the hall hurried in, wailing aloud as their first glance showed them all was over. In the confusion, Felipe, with a

pale, set face, pushed the statue back into its place. Even then a premonition of horror swept over him. What was he, the son, to find behind that secret door, at sight of which his mother had died with that look of anguished terror in her eyes? All through the sad duties of the next four days Felipe was conscious of the undercurrent of this premonition. The funeral ceremonies were impressive. The little chapel could not hold the quarter part of those who came, from far and near. Everybody wished to do honor to the Señora Moreno. A priest from Ventura and one from San Luis Obispo were there. When all was done, they bore the Señora to the little graveyard on the hillside, and laid her by the side of her husband and her children; silent and still at last, the restless, passionate, proud, sad heart! When, the night after the funeral, the servants saw Señor Felipe going into his mother's room, they shuddered, and whispered, "Oh, he must not! He will break his heart, Señor Felipe! How he loved her!"

Old Marda ventured to follow him, and at the threshold said: "Dear Señor Felipe, do not! It is not good to go there! Come away!"

But he put her gently by, saying, "I would rather be here, good Marda;" and went in and locked the door.

It was past midnight when he came out. His face was stern. He had buried his mother again. Well might the Señora have dreaded to tell to Felipe the tale of the Ortegna treasure. Until he reached

the bottom of the jewel-box, and found the Señora Ortegna's letter to his mother, he was in entire bewilderment at all he saw. After he had read this letter, he sat motionless for a long time, his head buried in his hands. His soul was wrung.

"And she thought that shame, and not this!" he said bitterly.

But one thing remained for Felipe now. If Ramona lived, he would find her, and restore to her this her rightful property. If she were dead, it must go to the Santa Barbara College.

"Surely my mother must have intended to give it to the Church," he said. "But why keep it all this time? It is this that has killed her. Oh, shame! oh, disgrace!" From the grave in which Felipe had buried his mother now, was no resurrection.

Replacing everything as before in the safe hiding-place, he sat down and wrote a letter to the Superior of the Santa Barbara College, telling him of the existence of these valuables, which in certain contingencies would belong to the College. Early in the morning he gave this letter to Juan Canito, saying: "I am going away, Juan, on a journey. If anything happens to me, and I do not return, send this letter by trusty messenger to Santa Barbara."

"Will you be long away, Señor Felipe?" asked the old man, piteously.

"I cannot tell, Juan," replied Felipe. "It may be only a short time; it may be long. I leave everything in your care. You will do all according to

your best judgment, I know. I will say to all that I have left you in charge."

"Thanks, Señor Felipe! Thanks!" exclaimed Juan, happier than he had been for two years. "Indeed, you may trust me! From the time you were a boy till now, I have had no thought except for your house."

Even in heaven the Señora Moreno had felt woe as if in hell, had she known the thoughts with which her Felipe galloped this morning out of the gateway through which, only the day before, he had walked weeping behind her body borne to burial.

"And she thought this no shame to the house of Moreno!" he said. "My God!"

XXII

DURING the first day of Ramona's and Alessandro's sad journey they scarcely spoke. Alessandro walked at the horses' heads, his face sunk on his breast, his eyes fixed on the ground. Ramona watched him in anxious fear. Even the baby's voice and cooing laugh won from him no response. After they were camped for the night, she said, "Dear Alessandro, will you not tell me where we are going?"

In spite of her gentleness, there was a shade of wounded feeling in her tone. Alessandro flung himself on his knees before her, and cried: "My Majella! my Majella! it seems to me I am going mad! I can-

not tell what to do. I do not know what I think; all my thoughts seem whirling round as leaves do in brooks in the time of the spring rains. Do you think I can be going mad? It was enough to make me!"

Ramona, her own heart wrung with fear, soothed him as best she could. "Dear Alessandro," she said, "let us go to Los Angeles, and not live with the Indians any more. You could get work there. You could play at dances sometimes; there must be plenty of work. I could get more sewing to do, too. It would be better, I think."

He looked horror-stricken at the thought. "Go live among the white people!" he cried. "What does Majella think would become of one Indian, or two, alone among whites? If they will come to our villages and drive us out a hundred at a time, what would they do to one man alone? Oh, Majella is foolish!"

"But there are many of your people at work for whites at San Bernardino and other places," she persisted. "Why could not we do as they do?"

"Yes," he said bitterly, "at work for whites; so they are! Majella has not seen. No man will pay an Indian but half wages; even long ago, when the Fathers were not all gone, and tried to help the Indians, my father has told me that it was the way only to pay an Indian one-half that a white man or a Mexican had. It was the Mexicans, too, did that, Majella. And now they pay the Indians in money

sometimes, half wages; sometimes in bad flour, or things he does not want; sometimes in whiskey; and if he will not take it, and asks for his money, they laugh, and tell him to go, then. One man in San Bernardino last year, when an Indian would not take a bottle of sour wine for pay for a day's work, shot him in the cheek with his pistol, and told him to mind how he was insolent any more! Oh, Majella, do not ask me to go work in the towns! I should kill some man, Majella, if I saw things like that."

Ramona shuddered, and was silent. Alessandro continued: "If Majella would not be afraid, I know a place, high up on the mountain, where no white man has ever been, or ever will be. I found it when I was following a bear. The beast led me up. It was his home; and I said then, it was a fit hiding-place for a man. There is water, and a little green valley. We could live there; but it would be no more than to live; it is very small, the valley. Majella would be afraid?"

"Yes, Alessandro, I would be afraid, all alone on a high mountain. Oh, do not let us go there! Try something else first, Alessandro. Is there no other Indian village you know?"

"There is Saboba," he said, "at foot of the San Jacinto Mountain; I had thought of that. Some of my people went there from Temecula; but it is a poor little village, Majella. Majella would not like to live in it. Neither do I believe it will long be any safer than San Pasquale. There was a kind, good

old man who owned all that valley, — Señor Ravallo; he found the village of Saboba there when he came to the country. It is one of the very oldest of all; he was good to all Indians, and he said they should never be disturbed, never. He is dead; but his three sons have the estate yet, and I think they would keep their father's promise to the Indians. But you see, to-morrow, Majella, they may die, or go back to Mexico, as Señor Valdez did, and then the Americans will get it, as they did Temecula. And there are already white men living in the valley. We will go that way, Majella. Majella shall see. If she says stay, we will stay."

It was in the early afternoon that they entered the broad valley of San Jacinto. They entered it from the west. As they came in, though the sky over their heads was overcast and gray, the eastern and northeastern part of the valley was flooded with a strange light, at once ruddy and golden. It was a glorious sight. The jagged tops and spurs of San Jacinto Mountain shone like the turrets and posterns of a citadel built of rubies. The glow seemed preternatural.

"Behold San Jacinto!" cried Alessandro.

Ramona exclaimed in delight. "It is an omen!" she said. "We are going into the sunlight, out of the shadow;" and she glanced back at the west, which was of a slaty blackness.

"I like it not!" said Alessandro. "The shadow follows too fast!"

Indeed it did. Even as he spoke, a fierce wind blew from the north, and tearing off fleeces from the black cloud, sent them in scurrying masses across the sky. In a moment more, snow-flakes began to fall.

"Holy Virgin!" cried Alessandro. Too well he knew what it meant. He urged the horses, running fast beside them. It was of no use. Too much even for Baba and Benito to make any haste, with the heavily loaded wagon.

"There is an old sheep-corral and a hut not over a mile farther, if we could but reach it!" groaned Alessandro. "Majella, you and the child will freeze."

"She is warm on my breast," said Ramona; "but, Alessandro, what ice in this wind! It is like a knife at my back!"

Alessandro uttered another ejaculation of dismay. The snow was fast thickening; already the track was covered. The wind lessened.

"Thank God, that wind no longer cuts as it did," said Ramona, her teeth chattering, clasping the baby closer and closer.

"I would rather it blew than not," said Alessandro; "it will carry the snow before it. A little more of this, and we cannot see, any more than in the night."

Still thicker and faster fell the snow; the air was dense; it was, as Alessandro had said, worse than the darkness of night, — this strange opaque white-

H. Sandham

ness, thick, choking, freezing one's breath. Presently the rough jolting of the wagon showed that they were off the road. The horses stopped; refused to go on.

"We are lost, if we stay here!" cried Alessandro. "Come, my Benito, come!" and he took him by the head, and pulled him by main force back into the road, and led him along. It was terrible. Ramona's heart sank within her. She felt her arms growing numb; how much longer could she hold the baby safe? She called to Alessandro. He did not hear her; the wind had risen again; the snow was being blown in masses; it was like making headway among whirling snow-drifts.

"We will die," thought Ramona. "Perhaps it is as well!" And that was the last she knew, till she heard a shouting, and found herself being shaken and beaten, and heard a strange voice saying, "Sorry ter handle yer so rough, ma'am, but we've got ter git yer out ter the fire!"

"Fire!" Were there such things as fire and warmth? Mechanically she put the baby into the unknown arms that were reaching up to her, and tried to rise from her seat; but she could not move.

"Set still! set still!" said the strange voice. "I'll jest carry the baby ter my wife, an' come back fur you. I allowed yer could n't git up on yer feet;" and the tall form disappeared. The baby, thus vigorously disturbed from her warm sleep, began to cry.

"Thank God!" said Alessandro, at the plunging horses' heads. "The child is alive! Majella!" he called.

"Yes, Alessandro," she answered faintly, the gusts sweeping her voice like a distant echo past him.

It was a marvellous rescue. They had been nearer the old sheep-corral than Alessandro had thought; but except that other storm-beaten travellers had reached it before them, Alessandro had never found it. Just as he felt his strength failing him, and had thought to himself, in almost the same despairing words as Ramona, "This will end all our troubles," he saw a faint light to the left. Instantly he had turned the horses' heads towards it. The ground was rough and broken, and more than once he had been in danger of overturning the wagon; but he had pressed on, shouting at intervals for help. At last his call was answered, and another light appeared; this time a swinging one, coming slowly towards him, — a lantern, in the hand of a man, whose first words, "Wall, stranger, I allow yer inter trouble," were as intelligible to Alessandro as if they had been spoken in the purest San Luiseno dialect.

Not so, to the stranger, Alessandro's grateful reply in Spanish.

"Another o' these no-'count Mexicans, by thunder!" thought Jeff Hyer to himself. "Blamed ef I 'd lived in a country all my life, ef I would n't know better 'n to git caught out in such weather 's this!" And as he put the crying babe into his wife 's

arms, he said half impatiently, "Ef I'd knowed 't wuz Mexicans, Ri, I would n't ev' gone out ter 'um. They 're more ter hum 'n I am, 'n these yer tropicks."

"Naow, Jeff, yer know yer would n't let ennythin' in shape ev a human creetur go perishin' past aour fire sech weather 's this," replied the woman, as she took the baby, which recognized the motherly hand at its first touch, and ceased crying.

"Why, yer pooty, blue-eyed little thing!" she exclaimed, as she looked into the baby's face. "I declar, Jos, think o' sech a mite 's this bein' aout 'n this weather. I 'll jest warm up some milk for it this minnit."

"Better see t' th' mother fust, Ri," said Jeff, leading, half carrying, Ramona into the hut. "She 's nigh abaout froze stiff!"

But the sight of her baby safe and smiling was a better restorative for Ramona than anything else, and in a few moments she had fully recovered. It was in a strange group she found herself. On a mattress, in the corner of the hut, lay a young man apparently about twenty-five, whose bright eyes and flushed cheeks told but too plainly the story of his disease. The woman, tall, ungainly, her face gaunt, her hands hardened and wrinkled, gown ragged, shoes ragged, her dry and broken light hair wound in a careless, straggling knot in her neck, wisps of it flying over her forehead, was certainly not a prepossessing figure. Yet spite of her careless, unkempt

condition, there was a certain gentle dignity in her bearing, and a kindliness in her glance, which won trust and warmed hearts at once. Her pale blue eyes were still keen-sighted; and as she fixed them on Ramona, she thought to herself, "This ain't no common Mexican, no how." "Be ye movers?" she said.

Ramona stared. In the little English she knew, that word was not included. "Ah, Señora," she said regretfully, "I cannot talk in the English speech; only in Spanish."

"Spanish, eh? Yer mean Mexican? Jos, hyar, he kin talk thet. He can't talk much, though; 't ain't good fur him; his lungs is out er kilter. Thet 's what we 're bringin' him hyar fur, — fur warm climate! 'pears like it, don't it?" and she chuckled grimly, but with a side glance of ineffable tenderness at the sick man. "Ask her who they be, Jos," she added.

Jos lifted himself on his elbow, and fixing his shining eyes on Ramona, said in Spanish, "My mother asks if you are travellers?"

"Yes," said Ramona. "We have come all the way from San Diego. We are Indians."

"Injuns!" ejaculated Jos's mother. "Lord save us, Jos! Hev we reelly took in Injuns? What on airth — Well, well, she 's fond uv her baby 's enny white woman! I kin see thet; an', Injun or no Injun, they 've got to stay naow. Yer could n't turn a dog out 'n sech weather 's this. I bet thet baby's father wuz white, then. Look at them blue eyes."

Ramona listened and looked intently, but could understand nothing. Almost she doubted if the woman were really speaking English. She had never before heard so many English sentences without being able to understand one word. The Tennessee drawl so altered even the commonest words, that she did not recognize them. Turning to Jos, she said gently, "I know very little English. I am so sorry I cannot understand. Will it tire you to interpret to me what your mother said?"

Jos was as full of humor as his mother. "She wants me to tell her what you wuz sayin'," he said. "I allow, I'll only tell her the part on 't she 'll like best. — My mother says you can stay here with us till the storm is over," he said to Ramona.

Swifter than lightning, Ramona had seized the woman's hand and carried it to her heart, with an expressive gesture of gratitude and emotion. "Thanks! thanks! Señora!" she cried.

"What is it she calls me, Jos?" asked his mother.

"Señora," he replied. "It only means the same as lady."

"Shaw, Jos! You tell her I ain't any lady. Tell her everybody round where we live calls me 'Aunt Ri,' or 'Mis Hyer;' she kin call me whichever she 's a mind to. She 's reel sweet-spoken."

With some difficulty Jos explained his mother's disclaimer of the title of Señora, and the choice of names she offered to Ramona.

Ramona, with smiles which won both mother and

son, repeated after him both names, getting neither exactly right at first trial, and finally said, "I like 'Aunt Ri' best; she is so kind, like aunt, to every one."

"Naow, ain't thet queer, Jos," said Aunt Ri, "aout here 'n thes wilderness to ketch sumbody sayin' thet, — jest what they all say ter hum? I donno 's I'm enny kinder 'n ennybody else. I don't want ter see ennybody put upon, nor noways sufferin', ef so be 's I kin help; but thet ain't ennythin' stronary, ez I know. I donno how ennybody could feel enny different."

"There 's lots doos, mammy," replied Jos, affectionately. "Yer 'd find out fast enuf, ef yer went raound more. There 's mighty few 's good 's you air ter everybody."

Ramona was crouching in the corner by the fire, her baby held close to her breast. The place which at first had seemed a haven of warmth, she now saw was indeed but a poor shelter against the fearful storm which raged outside. It was only a hut of rough boards, carelessly knocked together for a shepherd's temporary home. It had been long unused, and many of the boards were loose and broken. Through these crevices, at every blast of the wind, the fine snow swirled. On the hearth were burning a few sticks of wood, dead cottonwood branches, which Jeff Hyer had hastily collected before the storm reached its height. A few more sticks lay by the hearth. Aunt Ri glanced at them anxiously.

A poor provision for a night in the snow. "Be ye warm, Jos?" she asked.

"Not very, mammy," he said; "but I ain't cold, nuther; an' thet 's somethin'."

It was the way in the Hyer family to make the best of things; they had always possessed this virtue to such an extent, that they suffered from it as from a vice. There was hardly to be found in all Southern Tennessee a more contented, shiftless, ill-bestead family than theirs. But there was no grumbling. Whatever went wrong, whatever was lacking, it was "jest like aour luck," they said, and did nothing, or next to nothing, about it. Good-natured, affectionate, humorous people; after all, they got more comfort out of life than many a family whose surface conditions were incomparably better than theirs. When Jos, their oldest child and only son, broke down, had hemorrhage after hemorrhage, and the doctor said the only thing that could save him was to go across the plains in a wagon to California, they said, "What good luck 'Lizy was married last year! Now there ain't nuthin' ter hinder sellin' the farm 'n' goin' right off." And they sold their little place for half it was worth, traded cattle for a pair of horses and a covered wagon, and set off, half beggared, with their sick boy on a bed in the bottom of the wagon, as cheery as if they were rich people on a pleasure-trip. A pair of steers "to spell" the horses, and a cow to give milk for Jos, they drove before them; and so they had come by slow stages, sometimes camping

for a week at a time, all the way from Tennessee to the San Jacinto Valley. They were rewarded. Jos was getting well. Another six months, they thought, would see him cured; and it would have gone hard with any one who had tried to persuade either Jefferson or Maria Hyer that they were not as lucky a couple as could be found. Had they not saved Joshua, their son?

Nicknames among this class of poor whites in the South seem singularly like those in vogue in New England. From totally opposite motives, the lazy, easy-going Tennesseean and the hurry-driven Vermonter cut down all their family names to the shortest. To speak three syllables where one will answer, seems to the Vermonter a waste of time; to the Tennesseean, quite too much trouble. Mrs. Hyer could hardly recollect ever having heard her name, "Maria," in full; as a child, and until she was married, she was simply "Ri;" and as soon as she had a house of her own, to become a centre of hospitality and help, she was adopted by common consent of the neighborhood, in a sort of titular and universal aunt-hood, which really was a much greater tribute and honor than she dreamed. Not a man, woman, or child, within her reach, that did not call her or know of her as "Aunt Ri."

"I donno whether I 'd best make enny more fire naow or not," she said reflectively; "ef this storm 's goin' to last till mornin', we 'll come short o' wood, thet 's clear." As she spoke, the door of the hut

burst open, and her husband staggered in, followed by Alessandro, both covered with snow, their arms full of wood. Alessandro, luckily, knew of a little clump of young cottonwood-trees in a ravine, only a few rods from the house; and the first thing he had thought of, after tethering the horses in shelter between the hut and the wagons, was to get wood. Jeff, seeing him take a hatchet from the wagon, had understood, got his own, and followed; and now there lay on the ground enough to keep them warm for hours. As soon as Alessandro had thrown down his load, he darted to Ramona, and kneeling down, looked anxiously into the baby's face, then into hers; then he said devoutly, "The saints be praised, my Majella! It is a miracle!"

Jos listened in dismay to this ejaculation. "Ef they ain't Catholics!" he thought. "What kind o' Injuns be they, I wonder. I won't tell mammy they're Catholics; she'd feel wuss'n ever. I don't care what they be. Thet gal's got the sweetest eyes'n her head ever I saw sence I wuz born."

By help of Jos's interpreting, the two families soon became well acquainted with each other's condition and plans; and a feeling of friendliness, surprising under the circumstances, grew up between them.

"Jeff," said Aunt Ri, — "Jeff, they can't understand a word we say, so 't's no harm done, I s'pose, to speak afore 'em, though 't don't seem hardly fair to take advantage o' their not knowin' any language but their own; but I jest tell you thet I 've got a lesson

'n the subjeck uv Injuns. I've always hed a reel mean feelin' about 'em; I did n't want ter come nigh 'em, nor ter hev 'em come nigh me. This woman, here, she 's ez sweet a creetur 's ever I see; 'n' ez bound up 'n thet baby 's yer could ask enny woman to be; 'n' 's fur thet man, can't yer see, Jeff, he jest worships the ground she walks on? Thet 's a fact, Jeff. I donno 's ever I see a white man think so much uv a woman; come, naow, Jeff, d' yer think yer ever did yerself?"

Aunt Ri was excited. The experience was, to her, almost incredible. Her ideas of Indians had been drawn from newspapers, and from a book or two of narratives of massacres, and from an occasional sight of vagabond bands or families they had encountered in their journey across the plains. Here she found herself sitting side by side in friendly intercourse with an Indian man and Indian woman, whose appearance and behavior were attractive; towards whom she felt herself singularly drawn.

"I 'm free to confess, Jos," she said, "I would n't ha' bleeved it. I hain't seen nobody, black, white, or gray, sence we left hum, I 've took to like these yere folks. An' they 're real dark; 's dark 's any nigger in Tennessee; 'n' he 's pewer Injun; her father wuz white, she sez, but she don't call herself nothin' but an Injun, the same 's he is. D' yer notice the way she looks at him, Jos? Don't she jest set a store by thet feller? 'N' I don't blame her."

Indeed, Jos had noticed. No man was likely to see

Ramona with Alessandro without perceiving the rare quality of her devotion to him. And now there was added to this devotion an element of indefinable anxiety which made its vigilance unceasing. Ramona feared for Alessandro's reason. She had hardly put it into words to herself, but the terrible fear dwelt with her. She felt that another blow would be more than he could bear.

The storm lasted only a few hours. When it cleared, the valley was a solid expanse of white, and the stars shone out as if in an Arctic sky.

"It will be all gone by noon to-morrow," said Alessandro to Jos, who was dreading the next day.

"Not really!" he said.

"You will see," said Alessandro. "I have often known it thus. It is like death while it lasts; but it is never long."

The Hyers were on their way to some hot springs on the north side of the valley. Here they proposed to camp for three months, to try the waters for Jos. They had a tent, and all that was necessary for living in their primitive fashion. Aunt Ri was looking forward to the rest with great anticipation; she was heartily tired of being on the move. Her husband's anticipations were of a more stirring nature. He had heard that there was good hunting on San Jacinto Mountain. When he found that Alessandro knew the region thoroughly, and had been thinking of settling there, he was rejoiced, and proposed to him to become his companion and guide in hunting expe-

ditions. Ramona grasped eagerly at the suggestion; companionship, she was sure, would do Alessandro good, — companionship, the outdoor life, and the excitement of hunting, of which he was fond. This hot-spring cañon was only a short distance from the Saboba village, of which they had spoken as a possible home; which she had from the first desired to try. She no longer had repugnance to the thought of an Indian village; she already felt a sense of kinship and shelter with any Indian people. She had become, as Carmena had said, "one of them."

A few days saw the two families settled, — the Hyers in their tent and wagon, at the hot springs, and Alessandro and Ramona, with the baby, in a little adobe house in the Saboba village. The house belonged to an old Indian woman who, her husband having died, had gone to live with a daughter, and was very glad to get a few dollars by renting her own house. It was a wretched place: one small room, walled with poorly made adobe bricks, thatched with tule, no floor, and only one window. When Alessandro heard Ramona say cheerily, "Oh, this will do very well, when it is repaired a little," his face was convulsed, and he turned away; but he said nothing. It was the only house to be had in the village, and there were few better. Two months later, no one would have known it. Alessandro had had good luck in hunting. Two fine deerskins covered the earth floor; a third was spread over the bedstead; and the horns, hung on the walls, served for hooks to

hang clothes upon. The scarlet calico canopy was again set up over the bed, and the woven cradle, on its red manzanita frame, stood near. A small window in the door, and one more cut in the walls, let in light and air. On a shelf near one of these windows stood the little Madonna, again wreathed with vines as in San Pasquale.

When Aunt Ri first saw the room, after it was thus arranged, she put both arms akimbo, and stood in the doorway, her mouth wide open, her eyes full of wonder. Finally her wonder framed itself in an ejaculation: "Wall, I allow yer air fixed up!"

Aunt Ri, at her best estate, had never possessed a room which had the expression of this poor little mud hut of Ramona's. She could not understand it. The more she studied the place, the less she understood it. On returning to the tent, she said to Jos: "It beats all ever I see, the way thet Injun woman's got fixed up out er nothin'. It ain't no more 'n a hovel, a mud hovel, Jos, not much bigger 'n this yer tent, fur all three on 'em, an' the bed an' the stove an' everythin'; an' I vow, Jos, she's fixed it so 't looks jest like a parlor! It beats me, it doos. I'd jest like you to see it."

And when Jos saw it, and Jeff, they were as full of wonder as Aunt Ri had been. Dimly they recognized the existence of a principle here which had never entered into their life. They did not know it by name, and it could not have been either taught, transferred, or explained to the good-hearted

wife and mother who had been so many years the affectionate disorderly genius of their home. But they felt its charm; and when, one day, after the return of Alessandro and Jeff from a particularly successful hunt, the two families had sat down together to a supper of Ramona's cooking, — stewed venison and artichokes, and *frijoles* with chili, — their wonder was still greater.

"Ask her if this is Injun style of cooking, Jos," said Aunt Ri. "I never thought nothin' o' beans; but these air good, 'n' no mistake!"

Ramona laughed. "No; it is Mexican," she said. "I learned to cook from an old Mexican woman."

"Wall, I'd like the receipt on't; but I allow I should n't never git the time to fuss with it," said Aunt Ri; "but I may 's well git the rule, naow I'm here."

Alessandro began to lose some of his gloom. He had earned money. He had been lifted out of himself by kindly companionship; he saw Ramona cheerful, the little one sunny; the sense of home, the strongest passion Alessandro possessed, next to his love for Ramona, began again to awake in him. He began to talk about building a house. He had found things in the village better than he feared. It was but a poverty-stricken little handful, to be sure; still, they were unmolested; the valley was large; their stock ran free; the few white settlers, one at the upper end and two or three on the south

side, had manifested no disposition to crowd the Indians; the Ravallo brothers were living on the estate still, and there was protection in that, Alessandro thought. And Majella was content. Majella had found friends. Something, not quite hope, but akin to it, began to stir in Alessandro's heart. He would build a house; Majella should no longer live in this mud hut. But to his surprise, when he spoke of it, Ramona said no; they had all they needed, now. Was not Alessandro comfortable? She was. It would be wise to wait longer before building.

Ramona knew many things that Alessandro did not. While he had been away on his hunts, she had had speech with many a one he never saw. She had gone to the store and post-office several times, to exchange baskets or lace for flour, and she had heard talk there which disquieted her. She did not believe that Saboba was safe. One day she had heard a man say, "If there is a drought we shall have the devil to pay with our stock before winter is over." "Yes," said another; "and look at those damned Indians over there in Saboba, with water running all the time in their village! It's a shame they should have that spring!"

Not for worlds would Ramona have told this to Alessandro. She kept it locked in her own breast, but it rankled there like a ceaseless warning and prophecy. When she reached home that day she went down to the spring in the centre of the village,

and stood a long time looking at the bubbling water. It was indeed a priceless treasure; a long irrigating ditch led from it down into the bottom, where lay the cultivated fields, — many acres in wheat, barley, and vegetables. Alessandro himself had fields there from which they would harvest all they needed for the horses and their cow all winter, in case pasturage failed. If the whites took away this water, Saboba would be ruined. However, as the spring began in the very heart of the village, they could not take it without destroying the village. "And the Ravallos would surely never let that be done," thought Ramona. "While they live, it will not happen."

It was a sad day for Ramona and Alessandro when the kindly Hyers pulled up their tent-stakes and left the valley. Their intended three months had stretched into six, they had so enjoyed the climate, and the waters had seemed to do such good to Jos. But, "We ain't rich folks, yer know, not by a long ways, we ain't," said Aunt Ri; "an' we 've got pretty nigh down to where Jeff an' me 's got to begin airnin' suthin'. Ef we kin git settled 'n some o' these towns where there 's carpenterin' to be done. Jeff, he 's a master hand to thet kind o' work, though yer might n't think it; 'n' I kin airn right smart at weavin'; jest give me a good carpet-loom, 'n' I won't be beholden to nobody for vittles. I jest du love weavin'. I donno how I 've contented myself this hull year, or nigh about a year, without a loom. Jeff, he sez to me once, sez he, 'Ri, do yer think yer 'd be contented

in heaven without yer loom?' an' I was free to say I did n't know 's I should."

"Is it hard?" cried Ramona. "Could I learn to do it?" It was wonderful what progress in understanding and speaking English Ramona had made in these six months. She now understood nearly all that was said directly to her, though she could not follow general and confused conversation.

"Wall, 't is, an' 't ain't," said Aunt Ri. "I don't s'pose I 'm much of a jedge; fur I can't remember when I fust learned it. I know I set in the loom to weave when my feet could n't reach the floor; an' I don't remember nothin' about fust learnin' to spool 'n' warp. I 've tried to teach lots of folks; an' sum learns quick, an' some don't never learn; it 's jest 's 't strikes 'em. I should think, naow, thet you wuz one o' the kind could turn yer hand to anythin'. When we get settled in San Bernardino, if yer 'll come down thar, I 'll teach yer all I know, 'n' be glad ter. I donno 's 't 's goin' to be much uv a place for carpet-weavin' though, anywheres raound 'n this yer country; not but what thar 's plenty o' rags, but folks seems to be wearin' 'em; pooty gen'ral wear, I sh'd say. I 've seen more cloes on folks' backs hyar, thet wan't no more 'n fit for carpet-rags, than any place ever I struck. They 're dreffal sheftless lot, these yere Mexicans; 'n' the Injuns is wuss. Naow when I say Injuns, I don't never mean yeow, yer know thet. Yer ain't ever seemed to me one mite like an Injun."

"Most of our people have n't had any chance," said Ramona. "You would n't believe if I were to tell you what things have been done to them; how they are robbed, and cheated, and turned out of their homes."

Then she told the story of Temecula, and of San Pasquale, in Spanish, to Jos, who translated it with no loss in the telling. Aunt Ri was aghast; she found no words to express her indignation.

"I don't bleeve the Guvvermunt knows anything about it!" she said. "Why, they take folks up, 'n' penetentiarize 'em fur life, back 'n Tennessee, fur things thet ain't so bad 's thet! Somebody ought ter be sent ter tell 'em 't Washington what 's goin' on hyar."

"I think it 's the people in Washington that have done it," said Ramona, sadly. "Is it not in Washington all the laws are made?"

"I bleeve so!" said Aunt Ri. "Ain't it, Jos? It 's Congress, ain't 't, makes the laws?"

"I bleeve so!" said Jos. "They make some, at any rate. I donno 's they make 'em all."

"It is all done by the American law," said Ramona, "all these things; nobody can help himself; for if anybody goes against the law he has to be killed or put in prison; that was what the sheriff told Alessandro, at Temecula. He felt very sorry for the Temecula people, the sheriff did; but he had to obey the law himself. Alessandro says there is n't any help."

Aunt Ri shook her head. She was not convinced. "I sh'll make a business o' findin' out abaout this thing yit," she said. "I think yer hain't got the rights on 't yit. There 's cheatin' somewhere!"

"It 's all cheating!" said Ramona; "but there is n't any help for it, Aunt Ri. The Americans think it is no shame to cheat for money."

"I 'm an Ummeriken!" cried Aunt Ri; "an' Jeff Hyer, and Jos! We 're Ummerikens! 'n' we would n't cheat nobody, not ef we knowed it, not out er a dollar. We 're pore, an' I allus expect to be, but we 're above cheatin'; an' I tell you, naow, the Ummeriken people don't want any o' this cheatin' done, naow! I 'm going to ask Jeff haow 't is. Why, it 's a burnin' shame to any country! So 't is! I think something oughter be done abaout it! I would n't mind goin' myself, ef thar wan't anybody else!"

A seed had been sown in Aunt Ri's mind which was not destined to die for want of soil. She was hot with shame and anger, and full of impulse to do something. "I ain't nobody," she said; "I know thet well enough, — I ain't nobody nor nothin'; but I allow I 've got suthin' to say abaout the country I live in, 'n' the way things hed oughter be; or 't least Jeff hez; 'n' thet 's the same thing. I tell yer, Jos, I ain't goin' to rest, nor ter give yeou 'n' yer father no rest nuther, till yeou find aout what all this yere means she 's been tellin' us."

But sharper and closer anxieties than any con-

nected with rights to lands and homes were pressing upon Alessandro and Ramona. All summer the baby had been slowly drooping; so slowly that it was each day possible for Ramona to deceive herself, thinking that there had been since yesterday no loss, perhaps a little gain; but looking back from the autumn to the spring, and now from the winter to the autumn, there was no doubt that she had been steadily going down. From the day of that terrible chill in the snow-storm, she had never been quite well, Ramona thought. Before that, she was strong, always strong, always beautiful and merry. Now her pinched little face was sad to see, and sometimes for hours she made a feeble wailing cry without any apparent cause. All the simple remedies that Aunt Ri had known, had failed to touch her disease; in fact, Aunt Ri from the first had been baffled in her own mind by the child's symptoms. Day after day Alessandro knelt by the cradle, his hands clasped, his face set. Hour after hour, night and day, indoors and out, he bore her in his arms, trying to give her relief. Prayer after prayer to the Virgin, to the saints, Ramona had said; and candles by the dozen, though money was now scant, she had burned before the Madonna; all in vain. At last she implored Alessandro to go to San Bernardino and see a doctor. "Find Aunt Ri," she said; "she will go with you, with Jos, and talk to him; she can make him understand. Tell Aunt Ri she seems just as she did when they were here, only weaker and thinner."

Alessandro found Aunt Ri in a sort of shanty on the outskirts of San Bernardino. "Not to rights yit," she said, — as if she ever would be. Jeff had found work; and Jos, too, had been able to do a little on pleasant days. He had made a loom and put up a loom-house for his mother, — a floor just large enough to hold the loom; rough walls, and a roof; one small square window, — that was all; but if Aunt Ri had been presented with a palace, she would not have been so well pleased. Already she had woven a rag carpet for herself, was at work on one for a neighbor, and had promised as many more as she could do before spring; the news of the arrival of a rag-carpet weaver having gone with despatch all through the lower walks of San Bernardino life. "I would n't hev bleeved they hed so many rags besides what they 're wearin'," said Aunt Ri, as sack after sack appeared at her door. Already, too, Aunt Ri had gathered up the threads of the village life; in her friendly, impressionable way she had come into relation with scores of people, and knew who was who, and what was what, and why, among them all, far better than many an old resident of the town.

When she saw Benito galloping up to her door, she sprang down from her high stool at the loom, and ran bareheaded to the gate, and before Alessandro had dismounted, cried: "Ye 're jest the man I wanted; I 've been tryin' to 'range it so 's we could go down 'n' see yer, but Jeff could n't leave the job

he 's got; an' I 'm druv nigh abaout off my feet, 'n' I donno when we 'd hev fetched it. How 's all? Why did n't yer come in ther wagon 'n' fetch 'em 'long? I 've got heaps ter tell yer. I allowed yer had n't got the rights o' all them things. The Guvvermunt ain't on the side o' the thieves, as yer said. I knowed they could n't be; an' they 've jest sent out a man a purpose to look after things fur yer, — to take keer o' the Injuns 'n' nothin' else. Thet 's what he 's here fur. He come last month; he 's a reel nice man. I seen him 'n' talked with him a spell, last week; I 'm gwine to make his wife a rag carpet. 'N' there 's a doctor, too, to 'tend ter yer when ye 're sick, 'n' the Guvvermunt pays him; yer don't hev to pay nothin'; 'n' I tell yeow, thet 's a heap o' savin', to git yer docterin' fur nuthin'! "

Aunt Ri was out of breath. Alessandro had not understood half she said. He looked about helplessly for Jos. Jos was away. In his broken English he tried to explain what Ramona had wished her to do.

" Doctor! Thet 's jest what I 'm tellin' yer! There 's one here 's paid by the Guvvermunt to 'tend to all Injuns thet 's sick. I 'll go 'n' show yer ter his house. I kin tell him jest how the baby is. P'r'aps he 'll drive down 'n' see her! "

Ah! if he would! What would Majella say, should she see him enter the door bringing a doctor!

Luckily Jos returned in time to go with them to the doctor's house as interpreter. Alessandro was

bewildered. He could not understand this new phase of affairs. Could it be true? As they walked along, he listened with trembling, half-incredulous hope to Jos's interpretation of Aunt Ri's voluble narrative.

The doctor was in his office. To Aunt Ri's statement of Alessandro's errand he listened indifferently, and then said, "Is he an Agency Indian?"

"A what?" exclaimed Aunt Ri.

"Does he belong to the Agency? Is his name on the Agency books?"

"No," said she; "he never heern uv any Agency till I wuz tellin' him, jest naow. We knoo him, him 'n' her, over 'n San Jacinto. He lives in Saboba. He 's never been to San Bernardino sence the Agent come aout."

"Well, is he going to put his name down on the books?" said the doctor, impatiently. "You ought to have taken him to the Agent first."

"Ain't you the Guvvermunt doctor for all Injuns?" asked Aunt Ri, wrathfully. "Thet 's what I heerd."

"Well, my good woman, you hear a great deal, I expect, that is n't true;" and the doctor laughed coarsely but not ill-naturedly, Alessandro all the time studying his face with the scrutiny of one awaiting life and death; "I am the Agency physician, and I suppose all the Indians will sooner or later come in and report themselves to the Agent; you 'd better take this man over there. What does he want now?"

Aunt Ri began to explain the baby's case. Cutting her short, the doctor said, "Yes, yes, I understand. I'll give him something that will help her;" and going into an inner room, he brought out a bottle of dark-colored liquid, wrote a few lines of prescription, and handed it to Alessandro, saying, "That will do her good, I guess."

"Thanks, Señor, thanks," said Alessandro.

The doctor stared. "That's the first Indian's said 'Thank you' in this office," he said. "You tell the Agent you've brought him a *rara avis*."

"What's that, Jos?" said Aunt Ri, as they went out.

"Donno!" said Jos. "I don't like thet man, anyhow, mammy. He's no good."

Alessandro looked at the bottle of medicine like one in a dream. Would it make the baby well? Had it indeed been given to him by that great Government in Washington? Was he to be protected now? Could this man, who had been sent out to take care of Indians, get back his San Pasquale farm for him? Alessandro's brain was in a whirl.

From the doctor's office they went to the Agent's house. Here, Aunt Ri felt herself more at home.

"I've brought ye thet Injun I wuz tellin' ye uv," she said, with a wave of her hand towards Alessandro. "We've ben ter ther doctor's to git some metcen fur his baby. She's reel sick, I'm afeerd."

The Agent sat down at his desk, opened a large ledger, saying as he did so, "The man's never been here before, has he?"

"No," said Aunt Ri.

"What is his name?"

Jos gave it, and the Agent began to write it in the book. "Stop him!" cried Alessandro, agitatedly, to Jos. "Don't let him write, till I know what he puts my name in his book for!"

"Wait," said Jos. "He does n't want you to write his name in that book. He wants to know what it's put there for."

Wheeling his chair with a look of suppressed impatience, yet trying to speak kindly, the Agent said: "There's no making these Indians understand anything. They seem to think if I have their names in my book, it gives me some power over them."

"Wall, don't it?" said the direct-minded Aunt Ri. "Hain't yer got any power over 'em? If yer hain't got it over them, who have yer got it over? What yer goin' to do for 'em?"

The Agent laughed in spite of himself. "Well, Aunt Ri," — she was already "Aunt Ri" to the Agent's boys, — "that's just the trouble with this Agency. It is very different from what it would be if I had all my Indians on a reservation."

Alessandro understood the words "my Indians." He had heard them before.

"What does he mean by his Indians, Jos?" he asked fiercely. "I will not have my name in his book if it makes me his."

When Jos reluctantly interpreted this, the Agent lost his temper. "That's all the use there is trying

to do anything with them! Let him go, then, if he does n't want any help from the Government!"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Aunt Ri. "Yeow jest explain it to Jos, an' he 'll make him understand."

Alessandro's face had darkened. All this seemed to him exceedingly suspicious. Could it be possible that Aunt Ri and Jos, the first whites except Mr. Hartsel he had ever trusted, were deceiving him? No; that was impossible. But they themselves might be deceived. That they were simple and ignorant, Alessandro well knew. "Let us go!" he said. "I do not wish to sign any paper."

"Naow don't be a fool, will yeow? Yeow ain't signin' a thing!" said Aunt Ri. "Jos, yeow tell him I say there ain't anythin' a bindin' him, hevin' his name 'n thet book. It's only so the Agent kin know what Injuns wants help, 'n' where they air. Ain't thet so?" she added, turning to the Agent. "Tell him he can't hev the Agency doctor, ef he ain't on the Agency books."

Not have the doctor? Give up this precious medicine which might save his baby's life? No! he could not do that. Majella would say, let the name be written, rather than that.

"Let him write the name, then," said Alessandro, doggedly; but he went out of the room feeling as if he had put a chain around his neck.

XXIII

THE medicine did the baby no good. In fact, it did her harm. She was too feeble for violent remedies. In a week, Alessandro appeared again at the Agency doctor's door. This time he had come with a request which to his mind seemed not unreasonable. He had brought Baba for the doctor to ride. Could the doctor then refuse to go to Saboba? Baba would carry him there in three hours, and it would be like a cradle all the way. Alessandro's name was in the Agency books. It was for this he had written it, — for this and nothing else, — to save the baby's life. Having thus enrolled himself as one of the Agency Indians, he had a claim on this the Agency

doctor. And that his application might be all in due form, he took with him the Agency interpreter. He had had a misgiving, before, that Aunt Ri's kindly volubility had not been well timed. Not one unnecessary word, was Alessandro's motto.

To say that the Agency doctor was astonished at being requested to ride thirty miles to prescribe for an ailing Indian baby, would be a mild statement of the doctor's emotion. He could hardly keep from laughing, when it was made clear to him that this was what the Indian father expected.

"Good Lord!" he said, turning to a crony who chanced to be lounging in the office. "Listen to that beggar, will you? I wonder what he thinks the Government pays me a year for doctoring Indians!"

Alessandro listened so closely it attracted the doctor's attention. "Do you understand English?" he asked sharply.

"A very little, Señor," replied Alessandro.

The doctor would be more careful in his speech, then. But he made it most emphatically clear that the thing Alessandro had asked was not only out of the question, but preposterous. Alessandro pleaded. For the child's sake he could do it. The horse was at the door; there was no such horse in San Bernardino County; he went like the wind, and one would not know he was in motion, it was so easy. Would not the doctor come down and look at the horse? Then he would see what it would be like to ride him.

"Oh, I've seen plenty of your Indian ponies," said the doctor. "I know they can run."

Alessandro lingered. He could not give up this last hope. The tears came into his eyes. "It is our only child, Señor," he said. "It will take you but six hours in all. My wife counts the moments till you come! If the child dies, she will die."

"No! no!" The doctor was weary of being importuned. "Tell the man it is impossible! I'd soon have my hands full, if I began to go about the country this way. They'd be sending for me down to Agua Caliente next, and bringing up their ponies to carry me."

"He will not go?" asked Alessandro.

The interpreter shook his head. "He cannot," he said.

Without a word Alessandro left the room. Presently he returned. "Ask him if he will come for money?" he said. "I have gold at home. I will pay him, what the white men pay him."

"Tell him no man of any color could pay me for going sixty miles!" said the doctor.

And Alessandro departed again, walking so slowly, however, that he heard the coarse laugh, and the words, "Gold! Looked like it, didn't he?" which followed his departure from the room.

When Ramona saw him returning alone, she wrung her hands. Her heart seemed breaking. The baby had lain in a sort of stupor since noon; she was plainly worse, and Ramona had been going from the

door to the cradle, from the cradle to the door, for an hour, looking each moment for the hoped-for aid. It had not once crossed her mind that the doctor would not come. She had accepted in much fuller faith than Alessandro the account of the appointment by the Government of these two men to look after the Indians' interests. What else could their coming mean, except that, at last, the Indians were to have justice? She thought, in her simplicity, that the doctor must have died, since Alessandro was riding home alone.

"He would not come!" said Alessandro, as he threw himself off his horse, wearily.

"Would not!" cried Ramona. "Would not! Did you not say the Government had sent him to be the doctor for Indians?"

"That was what they said," he replied. "You see it is a lie, like the rest! But I offered him gold, and he would not come then. The child must die, Majella!"

"She shall not die!" cried Ramona. "We will carry her to him!" The thought struck them both as an inspiration. Why had they not thought of it before? "You can fasten the cradle on Baba's back, and he will go so gently, she will think it is but play; and I will walk by her side, or you, all the way!" she continued. "And we can sleep at Aunt Ri's house. Oh, why, why did we not do it before? Early in the morning we will start."

All through the night they sat watching the little

creature. If they had ever seen death, they would have known that there was no hope for the child. But how should Ramona and Alessandro know?

The sun rose bright and warm. Before it was up, the cradle was ready, ingeniously strapped on Baba's back. When the baby was placed in it, she smiled. "The first smile she has given for days," cried Ramona. "Oh, the air itself will do good to her! Let me walk by her first! Come, Baba! Dear Baba!" and Ramona stepped almost joyfully by the horse's side, Alessandro riding Benito. As they paced along, their eyes never leaving the baby's face, Ramona said, in a low tone, "Alessandro, I am almost afraid to tell you what I have done. I took the little Jesus out of the Madonna's arms and hid it! Did you never hear, that if you do that, the Madonna will grant you anything, to get him back again in her arms? Did you ever hear of it?"

"Never!" exclaimed Alessandro, with horror in his tone. "Never, Majella! How dared you?"

"I dare anything now!" said Ramona. "I have been thinking to do it for some days, and to tell her she could not have him any more till she gave me back the baby well and strong; but I knew I could not have courage to sit and look at her all lonely without him in her arms, so I did not do it. But now we are to be away, I thought, that is the time; and I told her, 'When we come back with our baby well, you shall have your little Jesus again, too; now, Holy Mother, you go with us, and make the

doctor cure our baby!' Oh, I have heard, many times, women tell the Señora they had done this, and always they got what they wanted. Never will she let the Jesus be out of her arms more than three weeks before she will grant any prayer one can make. It was that way she brought you to me, Alessandro. I never before told you. I was afraid. I think she had brought you sooner, but I could keep the little Jesus hid from her only at night. In the day I could not, because the Señora would see. So she did not miss him so much; else she had brought you quicker."

"But, Majella," said the logical Alessandro, "it was because I could not leave my father that I did not come. As soon as he was buried, I came."

"If it had not been for the Virgin, you would never have come at all," said Ramona, confidently.

For the first hour of this sad journey it seemed as if the child were really rallying; the air, the sunlight, the novel motion, the smiling mother by her side, the big black horses she had already learned to love, all roused her to an animation she had not shown for days. But it was only the last flicker of the expiring flame. The eyes drooped, closed; a strange pallor came over the face. Alessandro saw it first. He was now walking, Ramona riding Benito. "Majella!" he cried, in a tone which told her all.

In a second she was at the baby's side, with a cry which smote the dying child's consciousness. Once more the eyelids lifted; she knew her mother; a

swift spasm shook the little frame; a convulsion as of agony swept over the face, then it was at peace. Majella's shrieks were heart-rending. Fiercely she put Alessandro away from her, as he strove to caress her. She stretched her arms up towards the sky. "I have killed her! I have killed her!" she cried. "Oh, let me die!"

Slowly Alessandro turned Baba's head homeward again.

"Oh, give her to me! Let her lie on my breast! I will hold her warm!" gasped Ramona.

Silently Alessandro laid the body in her arms. He had not spoken since his first cry of alarm. If Ramona had looked at him, she would have forgotten her grief for her dead child. Alessandro's face seemed turned to stone.

When they reached the house, Ramona, laying the child on the bed, ran hastily to a corner of the room, and lifting the deerskin, drew from its hiding-place the little wooden Jesus. With tears streaming, she laid it again in the Madonna's arms, and flinging herself on her knees, sobbed out prayers for forgiveness. Alessandro stood at the foot of the bed, his arms folded, his eyes riveted on the child. Soon he went out, still without speaking. Presently Ramona heard the sound of a saw. She groaned aloud, and her tears flowed faster: Alessandro was making the baby's coffin. Mechanically she rose, and, moving like one half paralyzed, she dressed the little one in fresh white clothes for the burial; then laying her in

the cradle, she spread over it the beautiful lace-wrought altar-cloth. As she adjusted its folds, her mind was carried back to the time when she embroidered it, sitting on the Señora's veranda; the song of the finches, the linnets; the voice and smile of Felipe; Alessandro sitting on the steps, drawing divine music from his violin. Was that she, — that girl who sat there weaving the fine threads in the beautiful altar-cloth? Was it a hundred years ago? Was it another world? Was it Alessandro yonder, driving those nails into a coffin? How the blows rang, louder and louder! The air seemed deafening full of sound. With her hands pressed to her temples, Ramona sank to the floor. A merciful unconsciousness set her free, for an interval, from her anguish.

When she opened her eyes, she was lying on the bed. Alessandro had lifted her and laid her there, making no effort to rouse her. He thought she would die too; and even that thought did not stir him from his lethargy. When she opened her eyes, and looked at him, he did not speak. She closed them. He did not move. Presently she opened them again. "I heard you out there," she said.

"Yes," he replied. "It is done." And he pointed to a little box of rough boards by the side of the cradle.

"Is Majella ready to go to the mountain now?" he asked.

"Yes, Alessandro, I am ready," she said.

"We will hide forever," he said.

"It makes no difference," she replied.

The Saboba women did not know what to think of Ramona now. She had never come into sympathetic relation with them, as she had with the women of San Pasquale. Her intimacy with the Hyers had been a barrier the Saboba people could not surmount. No one could be on such terms with whites, and be at heart an Indian, they thought; so they held aloof from Ramona. But now in her bereavement they gathered round her. They wept at sight of the dead baby's face, lying in its tiny white coffin. Ramona had covered the box with white cloth, and the lace altar-cloth thrown over it fell in folds to the floor. "Why does not this mother weep? Is she like the whites, who have no heart?" said the Saboba mothers among themselves; and they were embarrassed before her, and knew not what to say. Ramona perceived it, but had no life in her to speak to them. Benumbing terrors, which were worse than her grief, were crowding Ramona's heart now. She had offended the Virgin; she had committed a blasphemy: in one short hour the Virgin had punished her, had smitten her child dead before her eyes. And now Alessandro was going mad; hour by hour Ramona fancied she saw changes in him. What form would the Virgin's vengeance take next? Would she let Alessandro become a raging madman, and finally kill both himself and her? That seemed to Ramona

the most probable fate in store for them. When the funeral was over, and they returned to their desolate home, at the sight of the empty cradle Ramona broke down.

"Oh, take me away, Alessandro! Anywhere! I don't care where! anywhere, so it is not here!" she cried.

"Would Majella be afraid, now, on the high mountain, the place I told her of?" he said.

"No!" she replied earnestly. "No! I am afraid of nothing! Only take me away!"

A gleam of wild delight flitted across Alessandro's face. "It is well," he said. "My Majella, we will go to the mountain; we will be safe there."

The same fierce restlessness which took possession of him at San Pasquale again showed itself in his every act. His mind was unceasingly at work, planning the details of their move and of the new life. He mentioned them one after another to Ramona. They could not take both horses; feed would be scanty there, and there would be no need of two horses. The cow also they must give up. Alessandro would kill her, and the meat, dried, would last them for a long time. The wagon he hoped he could sell; and he would buy a few sheep; sheep and goats could live well in these heights to which they were going. Safe at last! Oh, yes, very safe; not only against whites, who, because the little valley was so small and bare, would not desire it, but against Indians also. For

the Indians, silly things, had a terror of the upper heights of San Jacinto; they believed the Devil lived there, and money would not hire one of the Saboba Indians to go so high as this valley which Alessandro had discovered. Fiercely he gloated over each one of these features of safety in their hiding-place. "The first time I saw it, Majella, — I believe the saints led me there, — I said, it is a hiding-place. And then I never thought I would be in want of such, — of a place to keep my Majella safe! safe! Oh, my Majel!" And he clasped her to his breast with a terrifying passion.

For an Indian to sell a horse and wagon in the San Jacinto valley was not an easy thing, unless he would give them away. Alessandro had hard work to give civil answers to the men who wished to buy Benito and the wagon for quarter of their value. He knew they would not have dared to so much as name such prices to a white man. Finally Ramona, who had felt unconquerable misgivings as to the wisdom of thus irrevocably parting from their most valuable possessions, persuaded him to take both horses and wagon to San Bernardino, and offer them to the Hyers to use for the winter.

It would be just the work for Jos, to keep him in the open air, if he could get teaming to do; she was sure he would be thankful for the chance. "He is as fond of the horses as we are ourselves, Alessandro," she said. "They would be well cared for; and then, if we did not like living on the mountain,

we could have the horses and wagon again when we came down, or Jos could sell them for us in San Bernardino. Nobody could see Benito and Baba working together, and not want them."

"Majella is wiser than the dove!" cried Alessandro. "She has seen what is the best thing to do. I will take them."

When he was ready to set off, he implored Ramona to go with him; but with a look of horror she refused. "Never," she cried, "one step on that accursed road! I will never go on that road again unless it is to be carried, as we brought her, dead."

Neither did Ramona wish to see Aunt Ri. Her sympathy would be intolerable, spite of all its affectionate kindliness. "Tell her I love her," she said, "but I do not want to see a human being yet; next year perhaps we will go down, — if there is any other way besides that road."

Aunt Ri was deeply grieved. She could not understand Ramona's feeling. It rankled deep. "I allow I 'd never hev bleeved it uv her, never," she said. "I shan't never think she wuz quite right 'n her head, to do 't! I allow we shan't never set eyes on ter her, Jos. I 've got jest thet feelin' abaout it. 'Pears like she 'd gone klar out 'er this yer world inter anuther."

The majestic bulwark of San Jacinto Mountain looms in the southern horizon of the San Bernardino valley. It was in full sight from the door of the little shanty in which Aunt Ri's carpet-loom stood.

As she sat there hour after hour, sometimes seven hours to the day, working the heavy treadle, and slipping the shuttle back and forth, she gazed with tender yearnings at the solemn, shining summit. When sunset colors smote it, it glowed like fire; on cloudy days, it was lost in the clouds.

"'Pears like 't was next door to heaven, up there, Jos," Aunt Ri would say. "I can't tell yer the feelin' 't comes over me, to look up t' it, ever sence I knowed she wuz there. 'T shines enuf to put yer eyes aout, sometimes; I allow 't ain't so light 's thet when you air into 't; 't can't be; ther could n't nobody stan' it, ef 't wuz. I allow 't must be like bein' dead, Jos, don't yer think so, to be livin' thar? He sed ther could n't nobody git to 'em. Nobody ever seed the place but hisself. He found it a huntin'. Thar 's water thar, 'n' thet 's abaout all thar is, 's fur 's I cud make aout; I allow we shan't never see her agin."

The horses and the wagon were indeed a godsend to Jos. It was the very thing he had been longing for; the only sort of work he was as yet strong enough to do, and there was plenty of it to be had in San Bernardino. But the purchase of a wagon suitable for the purpose was at present out of their power; the utmost Aunt Ri had hoped to accomplish was to have, at the end of a year, a sufficient sum laid up to buy one. They had tried in vain to exchange their heavy emigrant-wagon for one suitable for light work. "'Pears like I 'd die o'

shame," said Aunt Ri, "sometimes when I ketch myself er thinkin' what luck et 's ben to Jos, er gettin' thet Injun's hosses an' waggin. But ef Jos keeps on, airnin' ez much ez he hez so fur, he 's goin' ter pay the Injun part on 't, when he cums. I allow ter Jos 't ain't no more 'n fair. Why, them hosses, they 'll dew good tew days' work 'n one. I never see sech hosses; 'n' they 're jest like kittens; they 've ben dreffful pets, I allow. I know she set all the world, 'n' more tew, by thet nigh one. He wuz hern, ever sence she wuz a child. Pore thing, — 'pears like she hed n't hed no chance!"

Alessandro had put off, from day to day, the killing of the cow. It went hard with him to slaughter the faithful creature, who knew him, and came towards him at the first sound of his voice. He had pastured her, since the baby died, in a cañon about three miles northeast of the village, — a lovely green cañon with oak-trees and a running brook. It was here that he had thought of building his house if they had stayed in Saboba. But Alessandro laughed bitterly to himself now, as he recalled that dream. Already the news had come to Saboba that a company had been formed for the settling up of the San Jacinto valley; the Ravallo brothers had sold to this company a large grant of land. The white ranchmen in the valley were all fencing in their lands; no more free running of stock. The Saboba people were too poor to build miles of fencing; they must soon give up keeping stock; and the next

thing would be that they would be driven out, like the people of Temecula. It was none too soon that he had persuaded Majella to flee to the mountain. There, at least, they could live and die in peace, — a poverty-stricken life, and the loneliest of deaths; but they would have each other. It was well the baby had died; she was saved all this misery. By the time she had grown to be a woman, if she had lived, there would be no place in all the country where an Indian could find refuge. Brooding over such thoughts as these, Alessandro went up into the cañon one morning. It must be done. Everything was ready for their move; it would take many days to carry even their few possessions up the steep mountain trail to their new home; the pony which had replaced Benito and Baba could not carry a heavy load. While this was being done, Ramona would dry the beef which would be their supply of meat for many months. Then they would go.

At noon he came down with the first load of the meat, and Ramona began cutting it into long strips, as is the Mexican fashion of drying. Alessandro returned for the remainder. Early in the afternoon, as Ramona went to and fro about her work, she saw a group of horsemen riding from house to house, in the upper part of the village; women came running out excitedly from each house as the horsemen left it; finally one of them darted swiftly up the hill to Ramona. "Hide it! hide it!" she cried, breathless; "hide the meat! It is Merrill's men,

from the end of the valley. They have lost a steer, and they say we stole it. They found the place, with blood on it, where it was killed; and they say we did it. Oh, hide the meat! They took all that Fernando had; and it was his own, that he bought; he did not know anything about their steer!"

"I shall not hide it!" cried Ramona, indignantly. "It is our own cow. Alessandro killed it to-day."

"They won't believe you!" said the woman, in distress. "They 'll take it all away. Oh, hide some of it!" And she dragged a part of it across the floor, and threw it under the bed, Ramona standing by, stupefied.

Before she had spoken again, the forms of the galloping riders darkened the doorway; the foremost of them, leaping off his horse, exclaimed: "By God! here 's the rest of it. If they ain't the damnedest impudent thieves! Look at this woman, cutting it up! Put that down, will you? We 'll save you the trouble of dryin' our meat for us, besides killin' it! Fork over, now, every bit you 've got, you ——." And he called Ramona by a vile epithet.

Every drop of blood left Ramona's face. Her eyes blazed, and she came forward with the knife uplifted in her hand. "Out of my house, you dogs of the white color!" she said. "This meat is our own; my husband killed the creature but this morning."

Her tone and bearing surprised them. There were six of the men, and they had all swarmed into the little room.

"I say, Merrill," said one of them, "hold on; the squaw says her husband only jest killed it to-day. It might be theirs."

Ramona turned on him like lightning. "Are you liars, you all," she cried, "that you think I lie? I tell you the meat is ours; and there is not an Indian in this village would steal cattle!"

A derisive shout of laughter from all the men greeted this speech; and at that second, the leader, seeing the mark of blood where the Indian woman had dragged the meat across the ground, sprang to the bed, and lifting the deerskin, pointed with a sneer to the beef hidden there. "Perhaps, when you know Injuns 's well 's I do," he said, "you won't be for believin' all they say! What 's she got it hid under the bed for, if it was their own cow?" and he stooped to drag the meat out. "Give us a hand here, Jake!"

"If you touch it, I will kill you!" cried Ramona, beside herself with rage; and she sprang between the men, her uplifted knife gleaming.

"Hoity-toity!" cried Jake, stepping back; "that 's a handsome squaw when she 's mad! Say, boys, let's leave her some of the meat. She was n't to blame; of course, she believes what her husband told her."

"You go to grass for a soft-head, you Jake!" muttered Merrill, as he dragged the meat out from beneath the bed.

"What is all this?" said a deep voice in the door;

and Ramona, turning, with a glad cry, saw Alessandro standing there, looking on, with an expression which, even in her own terror and indignation, gave her a sense of dread, it was so icily defiant. He had his hand on his gun. "What is all this?" he repeated. He knew very well.

"It 's that Temecula man," said one of the men, in a low tone, to Merrill. "If I 'd known 't was his house, I would n't have let you come here. You 're up the wrong tree, sure!"

Merrill dropped the meat he was dragging over the floor, and turned to confront Alessandro's eyes. His countenance fell. Even he saw that he had made a mistake. He began to speak. Alessandro interrupted him. Alessandro could speak forcibly in Spanish. Pointing to his pony, which stood at the door with a package on its back, the remainder of the meat rolled in the hide, he said: "There is the remainder of the beef. I killed the creature this morning, in the cañon. I will take Señor Merrill to the place, if he wishes it. Señor Merrill's steer was killed down in the willows yonder, yesterday."

"That 's so!" cried the men, gathering around him. "How did you know? Who did it?"

Alessandro made no reply. He was looking at Ramona. She had flung her shawl over her head, as the other woman had done, and the two were cowering in the corner, their faces turned away. Ramona dared not look on; she felt sure Alessandro would kill some one. But this was not the type

of outrage that roused Alessandro to dangerous wrath. He even felt a certain enjoyment in the discomfiture of the self-constituted *posse* of searchers for stolen goods. To all their questions in regard to the stolen steer, he maintained silence. He would not open his lips. At last, angry, ashamed, with a volley of coarse oaths at him for his obstinacy, they rode away. Alessandro went to Ramona's side. She was trembling. Her hands were like ice.

"Let us go to the mountain to-night!" she gasped. "Take me where I need never see a white face again!"

A melancholy joy gleamed in Alessandro's eyes. Ramona, at last, felt as he did.

"I would not dare to leave Majella there alone, while there is no house," he said; "and I must go and come many times, before all the things can be carried."

"It will be less danger there than here, Alessandro," said Ramona, bursting into violent weeping as she recalled the insolent leer with which the man Jake had looked at her. "Oh! I cannot stay here!"

"It will not be many days, my Majel. I will borrow Fernando's pony, to take double at once; then we can go sooner."

"Who was it stole that man's steer?" said Ramona. "Why did you not tell them? They looked as if they would kill you."

"It was that Mexican that lives in the bottom, José Castro. I myself came on him, cutting the

steer up. He said it was his; but I knew very well, by the way he spoke, he was lying. But why should I tell? They think only Indians will steal cattle. I can tell them, the Mexicans steal more."

"I told them there was not an Indian in this village would steal cattle," said Ramona, indignantly.

"That was not true, Majella," replied Alessandro, sadly. "When they are very hungry, they will steal a heifer or steer. They lose many themselves, and they say it is not so much harm to take one when they can get it. This man Merrill, they say, branded twenty steers for his own, last spring, when he knew they were Saboba cattle!"

"Why did they not make him give them up?" cried Ramona.

"Did not Majella see to-day why they can do nothing? There is no help for us, Majella, only to hide; that is all we can do!"

A new terror had entered into Ramona's life; she dared not tell it to Alessandro; she hardly put it into words in her thoughts. But she was haunted by the face of the man Jake, as by a vision of evil, and on one pretext and another she contrived to secure the presence of some one of the Indian women in her house whenever Alessandro was away. Every day she saw the man riding past. Once he had galloped up to the open door, looked in, spoken in a friendly way to her, and ridden on. Ramona's instinct was right. Jake was merely biding his time. He had made up his mind to settle in the San Jacinto

valley, at least for a few years, and he wished to have an Indian woman come to live with him and keep his house. Over in Santa Ysabel, his brother had lived in that way with an Indian mistress for three years; and when he sold out, and left Santa Ysabel, he had given the woman a hundred dollars and a little house for herself and her child. And she was not only satisfied, but held herself, in consequence of this temporary connection with a white man, much above her Indian relatives and friends. When an Indian man had wished to marry her, she had replied scornfully that she would never marry an Indian; she might marry another white man, but an Indian, — never. Nobody had held his brother in any less esteem for this connection; it was quite the way in the country. And if Jake could induce this handsomest squaw he had ever seen, to come and live with him in a similar fashion, he would consider himself a lucky man, and also think he was doing a good thing for the squaw. It was all very clear and simple in his mind; and when, seeing Ramona walking alone in the village one morning, he overtook her, and walking by her side began to sound her on the subject, he had small misgivings as to the result. Ramona trembled as he approached her. She walked faster, and would not look at him; but he, in his ignorance, misinterpreted these signs egregiously.

"Are you married to your husband?" he finally said. "It is but a poor place he gives you to live in. If you will come and live with me, you shall

have the best house in the valley, as good as the Ravallos'; and —" Jake did not finish his sentence. With a cry which haunted his memory for years, Ramona sprang from his side as if to run; then, halting suddenly, she faced him, her eyes like javelins, her breath coming fast. "Beast!" she said, and spat towards him; then turned and fled to the nearest house, where she sank on the floor and burst into tears, saying that the man below there in the road had been rude to her. Yes, the women said, he was a bad man; they all knew it. Of this Ramona said no word to Alessandro. She dared not; she believed he would kill Jake.

When the furious Jake confided to his friend Merrill his repulse, and the indignity accompanying it, Merrill only laughed at him, and said: "I could have told you better than to try that woman. She 's married, fast enough. There 's plenty you can get, though, if you want 'em. They 're first-rate about a house, and jest 's faithful 's dogs. You can trust 'em with every dollar you 've got."

From this day, Ramona never knew an instant's peace or rest till she stood on the rim of the refuge valley, high on San Jacinto. Then, gazing around, looking up at the lofty pinnacles above, which seemed to pierce the sky, looking down upon the world, — it seemed the whole world, so limitless it stretched away at her feet, — feeling that infinite unspeakable sense of nearness to Heaven, remoteness from earth which comes only on mountain heights, she drew in a long

breath of delight, and cried: "At last! at last, Alessandro! Here we are safe! This is freedom! This is joy!"

"Can Majella be content?" he asked.

"I can almost be glad, Alessandro!" she cried, inspired by the glorious scene. "I dreamed not it was like this!"

It was a wondrous valley. The mountain seemed to have been cleft to make it. It lay near midway to the top, and ran transversely on the mountain's side, its western or southwestern end being many feet lower than the eastern. Both the upper and lower ends were closed by piles of rocks and tangled fallen trees; the rocky summit of the mountain itself made the southern wall; the northern was a spur, or ridge, nearly vertical, and covered thick with pine-trees. A man might roam years on the mountain and not find this cleft. At the upper end gushed out a crystal spring, which trickled rather than ran, in a bed of marshy green, the entire length of the valley, disappeared in the rocks at the lower end, and came out no more; many times Alessandro had searched for it lower down, but could find no trace of it. During the summer, when he was hunting with Jeff, he had several times climbed the wall and descended it on the inner side, to see if the rivulet still ran; and, to his joy, had found it the same in July as in January. Drought could not harm it, then. What salvation in such a spring! And the water was pure and sweet as if it came from the skies.

A short distance off was another ridge or spur of the mountain, widening out into almost a plateau. This was covered with acorn-bearing oaks; and under them were flat stones worn into hollows, where bygone generations of Indians had ground the nuts into meal. Generations long bygone indeed, for it was not in the memory of the oldest now living, that Indians had ventured so high up as this on San Jacinto. It was held to be certain death to climb to its summit, and foolhardy in the extreme to go far up its sides.

There was exhilaration in the place. It brought healing to both Alessandro and Ramona. Even the bitter grief for the baby's death was soothed. She did not seem so far off, since they had come so much nearer to the sky. They lived at first in a tent; no time to build a house, till the wheat and vegetables were planted. Alessandro was surprised, when he came to the ploughing, to see how much good land he had. The valley thrust itself, in inlets and coves, into the very rocks of its southern wall; lovely sheltered nooks these were, where he hated to wound the soft, flower-filled sward with his plough. As soon as the planting was done, he began to fell trees for the house. No mournful gray adobe this time, but walls of hewn pine, with half the bark left on; alternate yellow and brown, as gay as if glad hearts had devised it. The roof, of thatch, tule, and yucca-stalks, double laid and thick, was carried out several feet in front of the house, making a sort of bower-like veranda, supported

by young fir-tree stems, left rough. Once more Ramona would sit under a thatch with birds'-nests in it. A little corral for the sheep, and a rough shed for the pony, and the home was complete: far the prettiest home they had ever had. And here, in the sunny veranda, when autumn came, sat Ramona, plaiting out of fragrant willow twigs a cradle. The one over which she had wept such bitter tears in the valley, they had burned the night before they left their Saboba home. It was in early autumn she sat plaiting this cradle. The ground around was strewn with wild grapes drying; the bees were feasting on them in such clouds that Ramona rose frequently from her work to drive them away, saying, as she did so, "Good bees, make our honey from something else; we gain nothing if you drain our grapes for it; we want these grapes for the winter;" and as she spoke, her imagination sped fleetly forward to the winter. The Virgin must have forgiven her, to give her again the joy of a child in her arms. Ay, a joy! Spite of poverty, spite of danger, spite of all that cruelty and oppression could do, it would still be a joy to hold her child in her arms.

The baby was born before winter came. An old Indian woman, the same whose house they had hired in Saboba, had come up to live with Ramona. She was friendless now, her daughter having died, and she thankfully came to be as a mother to Ramona. She was ignorant and feeble; but Ramona saw in her always the picture of what her own mother

might perchance be, wandering, suffering, she knew not what or where; and her yearning, filial instinct found sad pleasure in caring for this lonely, childless, aged one.

Ramona was alone with her on the mountain at the time of the baby's birth. Alessandro had gone to the valley, to be gone two days; but Ramona felt no fear. When Alessandro returned, and she laid the child in his arms, she said with a smile, radiant once more, like the old smiles, "See, beloved! The Virgin has forgiven me; she has given us a daughter again!"

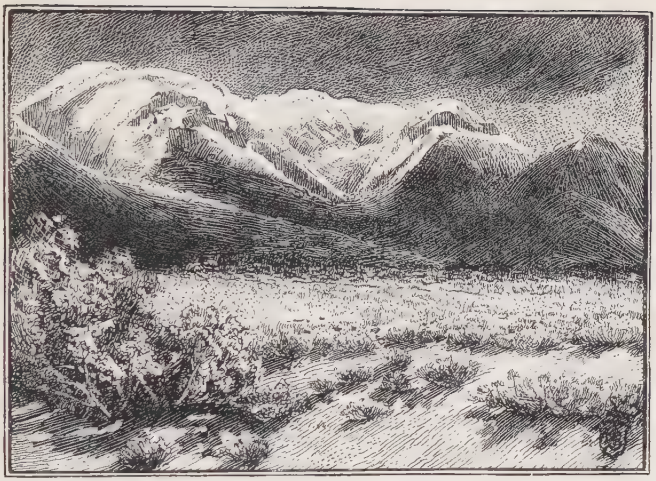
But Alessandro did not smile. Looking scrutinizingly into the baby's face, he sighed, and said, "Alas, Majella, her eyes are like mine, not yours!"

"I am glad of it," cried Ramona. "I was glad the first minute I saw it."

He shook his head. "It is an ill fate to have the eyes of Alessandro," he said. "They look ever on woe;" and he laid the baby back on Ramona's breast, and stood gazing sadly at her.

"Dear Alessandro," said Ramona, "it is a sin to always mourn. Father Salvierderra said if we repined under our crosses, then a heavier cross would be laid on us. Worse things would come."

"Yes," he said. "That is true. Worse things will come." And he walked away, with his head sunk deep on his breast.



XXIV

THERE was no real healing for Alessandro. His hurts had gone too deep. His passionate heart, ever secretly brooding on the wrongs he had borne, the hopeless outlook for his people in the future, and most of all on the probable destitution and suffering in store for Ramona, consumed itself as by hidden fires. Speech, complaint, active antagonism, might have saved him; but all these were foreign to his self-contained, reticent, repressed nature. Slowly, so slowly that Ramona could not tell on what hour or what day her terrible fears first changed to an even more terrible certainty, his brain gave way, and the thing, in dread of which he had cried out the

morning they left San Pasquale, came upon him. Strangely enough, and mercifully, now that it had really come, he did not know it. He knew that he suddenly came to his consciousness sometimes, and discovered himself in strange and unexplained situations; had no recollection of what had happened for an interval of time, longer or shorter. But he thought it was only a sort of sickness; he did not know that during those intervals his acts were the acts of a madman; never violent, aggressive, or harmful to any one; never destructive. It was piteous to see how in these intervals his delusions were always shaped by the bitterest experiences of his life. Sometimes he fancied that the Americans were pursuing him, or that they were carrying off Ramona, and he was pursuing them. At such times he would run with maniac swiftness for hours, till he fell exhausted on the ground, and slowly regained true consciousness by exhaustion. At other times he believed he owned vast flocks and herds; would enter any enclosure he saw, where there were sheep or cattle, go about among them, speak of them to passers-by as his own. Sometimes he would try to drive them away; but on being remonstrated with, would bewilderedly give up the attempt. Once he suddenly found himself in the road driving a small flock of goats, whose he knew not, nor whence he got them. Sitting down by the roadside, he buried his head in his hands. "What has happened to my memory?" he said. "I must be ill of a fever!" As he sat there,

the goats, of their own accord, turned and trotted back into a corral near by, the owner of which stood, laughing, on his door-sill; and when Alessandro came up, said good-naturedly, "All right, Alessandro! I saw you driving off my goats, but I thought you 'd bring 'em back."

Everybody in the valley knew him, and knew his condition. It did not interfere with his capacity as a worker, for the greater part of the time. He was one of the best shearers in the region, the best horse-breaker; and his services were always in demand, spite of the risk there was of his having at any time one of these attacks of wandering. His absences were a great grief to Ramona, not only from the loneliness in which it left her, but from the anxiety she felt lest his mental disorder might at any time take a more violent and dangerous shape. This anxiety was all the more harrowing because she must keep it locked in her own breast, her wise and loving instinct telling her that nothing could be more fatal to him than the knowledge of his real condition. More than once he reached home, breathless, panting, the sweat rolling off his face, crying aloud, "The Americans have found us out, Majella! They were on the trail! I baffled them. I came up another way." At such times she would soothe him like a child; persuade him to lie down and rest; and when he waked and wondered why he was so tired, she would say, "You were all out of breath when you came in,

dear. You must not climb so fast; it is foolish to tire one's self so."

In these days Ramona began to think earnestly of Felipe. She believed Alessandro might be cured. A wise doctor could surely do something for him. If Felipe knew what sore straits she was in, Felipe would help her. But how could she reach Felipe without the Señora's knowing it? And, still more, how could she send a letter to Felipe without Alessandro's knowing what she had written? Ramona was as helpless in her freedom on this mountain eyrie as if she had been chained hand and foot.

And so the winter wore away, and the spring. What wheat grew in their fields in this upper air! Wild oats, too, in every nook and corner. The goats frisked and fattened, and their hair grew long and silky; the sheep were already heavy again with wool, and it was not yet midsummer. The spring rains had been good; the stream was full, and flowers grew along its edges thick as in beds.

The baby had thrived; as placid, laughing a little thing as if its mother had never known sorrow. "One would think she had suckled pain," thought Ramona, "so constantly have I grieved this year; but the Virgin has kept her well."

If prayers could compass it, that would surely have been so; for night and day the devout, trusting, and contrite Ramona had knelt before the Madonna and told her golden beads, till they

Hy. Cunningham

were wellnigh worn smooth of all their delicate chasing.

At midsummer was to be a fête in the Saboba village, and the San Bernardino priest would come there. This would be the time to take the baby down to be christened; this also would be the time to send the letter to Felipe, enclosed in one to Aunt Ri, who would send it for her from San Bernardino. Ramona felt half guilty as she sat plotting what she should say and how she should send it, — she, who had never had in her loyal, transparent breast one thought secret from Alessandro since they were wedded. But it was all for his sake. When he was well, he would thank her.

She wrote the letter with much study and deliberation; her dread of its being read by the Señora was so great, that it almost paralyzed her pen as she wrote. More than once she destroyed pages, as being too sacred a confidence for unloving eyes to read. At last, the day before the fête, it was done, and safely hidden away. The baby's white robe, finely wrought in open-work, was also done, and freshly washed and ironed. No baby would there be at the fête so daintily wrapped as hers; and Alessandro had at last given his consent that the name should be Majella. It was a reluctant consent, yielded finally only to please Ramona; and, contrary to her wont, she had been willing in this instance to have her own wish fulfilled rather than his. Her heart was set upon having the seal of baptism added to the

name she so loved; and, "If I were to die," she thought, "how glad Alessandro would be, to have still a Majella!"

All her preparations were completed, and it was yet not noon. She seated herself on the veranda to watch for Alessandro, who had been two days away, and was to have returned the previous evening, to make ready for the trip to Saboba. She was disquieted at his failure to return at the appointed time. As the hours crept on and he did not come, her anxiety increased. The sun had gone more than an hour past the mid-heavens before he came. He had ridden fast; she had heard the quick strokes of the horse's hoofs on the ground before she saw him. "Why comes he riding like that?" she thought, and ran to meet him. As he drew near, she saw to her surprise that he was riding a new horse. "Why, Alessandro!" she cried. "What horse is this?"

He looked at her bewilderedly, then at the horse. True; it was not his own horse! He struck his hand on his forehead, endeavoring to collect his thoughts. "Where is my horse, then?" he said.

"My God! Alessandro," cried Ramona. "Take the horse back instantly. They will say you stole it."

"But I left my pony there in the corral," he said. "They will know I did not mean to steal it. How could I ever have made the mistake? I recollect nothing, Majella. I must have had one of the sicknesses."

Ramona's heart was cold with fear. Only too well

she knew what summary punishment was dealt in that region to horse-thieves. "Oh, let me take it back, dear!" she cried. "Let me go down with it. They will believe me."

"Majella!" he exclaimed, "think you I would send you into the fold of the wolf? My wood-dove! It is in Jim Farrar's corral I left my pony. I was there last night, to see about his sheep-shearing in the autumn. And that is the last I know. I will ride back as soon as I have rested. I am heavy with sleep."

Thinking it safer to let him sleep for an hour, as his brain was evidently still confused, Ramona assented to this, though a sense of danger oppressed her. Getting fresh hay from the corral, she with her own hands rubbed the horse down. It was a fine, powerful black horse; Alessandro had evidently urged him cruelly up the steep trail, for his sides were steaming, his nostrils white with foam. Tears stood in Ramona's eyes as she did what she could for him. He recognized her good-will, and put his nose to her face. "It must be because he was black like Benito, that Alessandro took him," she thought. "Oh, Mary Mother, help us to get the creature safe back!" she said.

When she went into the house, Alessandro was asleep. Ramona glanced at the sun. It was already in the western sky. By no possibility could Alessandro go to Farrar's and back before dark. She was on the point of waking him, when a furious

barking from Capitan and the other dogs roused him instantly from his sleep, and springing to his feet, he ran out to see what it meant. In a moment more Ramona followed, — only a moment, hardly a moment; but when she reached the threshold, it was to hear a gun-shot, to see Alessandro fall to the ground, to see, in the same second, a ruffianly man leap from his horse, and standing over Alessandro's body, fire his pistol again, once, twice, into the forehead, cheek. Then with a volley of oaths, each word of which seemed to Ramona's reeling senses to fill the air with a sound like thunder, he untied the black horse from the post where Ramona had fastened him, and leaping into his saddle again, galloped away, leading the horse. As he rode away, he shook his fist at Ramona, who was kneeling on the ground, striving to lift Alessandro's head, and to stanch the blood flowing from the ghastly wounds. "That 'll teach you damned Indians to leave off stealing our horses!" he cried, and with another volley of terrible oaths was out of sight.

With a calmness which was more dreadful than any wild outcry of grief, Ramona sat on the ground by Alessandro's body, and held his hands in hers. There was nothing to be done for him. The first shot had been fatal, close to his heart, — the murderer aimed well; the after-shots, with the pistol, were from mere wanton brutality. After a few seconds Ramona rose, went into the house, brought out the white altar-cloth, and laid it over the mutilated face.

As she did this, she recalled words she had heard Father Salvierderra quote as having been said by Father Junipero, when one of the Franciscan Fathers had been massacred by the Indians, at San Diego. "Thank God!" he said, "the ground is now watered by the blood of a martyr!"

"The blood of a martyr!" The words seemed to float in the air; to cleanse it from the foul blasphemies the murderer had spoken. "My Alessandro!" she said. "Gone to be with the saints; one of the blessed martyrs; they will listen to what a martyr says." His hands were warm. She laid them in her bosom, kissed them again and again. Stretching herself on the ground by his side, she threw one arm over him, and whispered in his ear, "My love, my Alessandro! Oh, speak once to Majella! Why do I not grieve more? My Alessandro! Is he not blest already? And soon we will be with him! The burdens were too great. He could not bear them!" Then waves of grief broke over her, and she sobbed convulsively; but still she shed no tears. Suddenly she sprang to her feet, and looked wildly around. The sun was not many hours high. Whither should she go for help? The old Indian woman had gone away with the sheep, and would not be back till dark. Alessandro must not lie there on the ground. To whom should she go? To walk to Saboba was out of the question. There was another Indian village nearer, — the village of the Cahuillas, on one of the high plateaus of San

Jacinto. She had once been there. Could she find that trail now? She must try. There was no human help nearer.

Taking the baby in her arms, she knelt by Alessandro, and kissing him, whispered, "Farewell, my beloved. I will not be long gone. I go to bring friends." As she set off, swiftly running, Capitan, who had been lying by Alessandro's side, uttering heart-rending howls, bounded to his feet to follow her. "No, Capitan," she said; and leading him back to the body, she took his head in her hands, looked into his eyes, and said, "Capitan, watch here." With a whimpering cry, he licked her hands, and stretched himself on the ground. He understood, and would obey; but his eyes followed her wistfully till she disappeared from sight.

The trail was rough, and hard to find. More than once Ramona stopped, baffled, among the rocky ridges and precipices. Her clothes were torn, her face bleeding, from the thorny shrubs; her feet seemed leaden, she made her way so slowly. It was dark in the ravines; as she climbed spur after spur, and still saw nothing but pine forests or bleak opens, her heart sank within her. The way had not seemed so long before. Alessandro had been with her; it was a joyous, bright day, and they had lingered wherever they liked, and yet the way had seemed short. Fear seized her that she was lost. If that were so, before morning she would be with Alessandro; for fierce beasts roamed San Jacinto by night. But for the

baby's sake, she must not die. Feverishly she pressed on. At last, just as it had grown so dark she could see only a few hand-breadths before her, and was panting more from terror than from running, lights suddenly gleamed out, only a few rods ahead. It was the Cahuilla village. In a few moments she was there.

It is a poverty-stricken little place, the Cahuilla village, — a cluster of tule and adobe huts, on a narrow bit of bleak and broken ground, on San Jacinto Mountain; the people are very poor, but are proud and high-spirited, — veritable mountaineers in nature, fierce and independent.

Alessandro had warm friends among them, and the news that he had been murdered, and that his wife had run all the way down the mountain, with her baby in her arms, for help, went like wild-fire through the place. The people gathered in an excited group around the house where Ramona had taken refuge. She was lying, half unconscious, on a bed. As soon as she had gasped out her terrible story, she had fallen forward on the floor, fainting, and the baby had been snatched from her arms just in time to save it. She did not seem to miss the child; had not asked for it, or noticed it when it was brought to the bed. A merciful oblivion seemed to be fast stealing over her senses. But she had spoken words enough to set the village in a blaze of excitement. It ran higher and higher. Men were everywhere mounting their horses, — some to go up and bring

Alessandro's body down; some organizing a party to go at once to Jim Farrar's house and shoot him: these were the younger men, friends of Alessandro. Earnestly the aged Capitan of the village implored them to refrain from such violence.

"Why should ten be dead instead of one, my sons?" he said. "Will you leave your wives and your children like his? The whites will kill us all if you lay hands on the man. Perhaps they themselves will punish him."

A derisive laugh rose from the group. Never yet within their experience had a white man been punished for shooting an Indian. The Capitan knew that as well as they did. Why did he command them to sit still like women, and do nothing, when a friend was murdered?

"Because I am old, and you are young. I have seen that we fight in vain," said the wise old man. "It is not sweet to me, any more than to you. It is a fire in my veins; but I am old. I have seen. I forbid you to go."

The women added their entreaties to his, and the young men abandoned their project. But it was with sullen reluctance; and mutterings were to be heard, on all sides, that the time would come yet. There was more than one way of killing a man. Farrar would not be long seen in the valley. Alessandro should be avenged.

As Farrar rode slowly down the mountain, leading his recovered horse, he revolved in his thoughts what

course to pursue. A few years before, he would have gone home, no more disquieted at having killed an Indian than if he had killed a fox or a wolf. But things were different now. This Agent, that the Government had taken it into its head to send out to look after the Indians, had made it hot, the other day, for some fellows in San Bernardino who had maltreated an Indian; he had even gone so far as to arrest several liquor-dealers for simply selling whiskey to Indians. If he were to take this case of Alessandro's in hand, it might be troublesome. Farrar concluded that his wisest course would be to make a show of good conscience and fair-dealing by delivering himself up at once to the nearest justice of the peace, as having killed a man in self-defence. Accordingly he rode straight to the house of a Judge Wells, a few miles below Saboba, and said that he wished to surrender himself as having committed "justifiable homicide" on an Indian, or Mexican, he did not know which, who had stolen his horse. He told a plausible story. He professed not to know the man, or the place; but did not explain how it was, that, knowing neither, he had gone so direct to the spot.

He said: "I followed the trail for some time, but when I reached a turn, I came into a sort of blind trail, where I lost the track. I think the horse had been led up on hard sod, to mislead any one on the track. I pushed on, crossed the creek, and soon found the tracks again in soft ground. This part of

the mountain was perfectly unknown to me, and very wild. Finally I came to a ridge, from which I looked down on a little ranch. As I came near the house, the dogs began to bark, just as I discovered my horse tied to a tree. Hearing the dogs, an Indian, or Mexican, I could not tell which, came out of the house, flourishing a large knife. I called out to him, 'Whose horse is that?' He answered in Spanish, 'It is mine.' 'Where did you get it?' I asked. 'In San Jacinto,' was his reply. As he still came towards me, brandishing the knife, I drew my gun, and said, 'Stop, or I 'll shoot!' He did not stop, and I fired; still he did not stop, so I fired again; and as he did not fall, I knocked him down with the butt of my gun. After he was down, I shot him twice with my pistol."

The duty of a justice in such a case as this was clear. Taking the prisoner into custody, he sent out messengers to summon a jury of six men to hold inquest on the body of said Indian, or Mexican; and early the next morning, led by Farrar, they set out for the mountain. When they reached the ranch, the body had been removed; the house was locked; no signs left of the tragedy of the day before, except a few blood-stains on the ground, where Alessandro had fallen. Farrar seemed greatly relieved at this unexpected phase of affairs. However, when he found that Judge Wells, instead of attempting to return to the valley that night, proposed to pass the night at a ranch only a few miles from the Cahuilla

village, he became almost hysterical with fright. He declared that the Cahuillas would surely come and murder him in the night, and begged piteously that the men would all stay with him to guard him.

At midnight Judge Wells was roused by the arrival of the Capitan and head men of the Cahuilla village. They had heard of his arrival with his jury, and they had come to lead them to their village, where the body of the murdered man lay. They were greatly distressed on learning that they ought not to have removed the body from the spot where the death had taken place, and that now no inquest could be held.

Judge Wells himself, however, went back with them, saw the body, and heard the full account of the murder as given by Ramona on her first arrival. Nothing more could now be learned from her, as she was in high fever and delirium; knew no one, not even her baby when they laid it on her breast. She lay restlessly tossing from side to side, talking incessantly, clasping her rosary in her hands, and constantly mingling snatches of prayers with cries for Alessandro and Felipe; the only token of consciousness she gave was to clutch the rosary wildly, and sometimes hide it in her bosom, if they attempted to take it from her.

Judge Wells was a frontiersman, and by no means sentimentally inclined; but the tears stood in his eyes as he looked at the unconscious Ramona.

Farrar had pleaded that the preliminary hearing

might take place immediately; but after this visit to the village, the judge refused his request, and appointed the trial a week from that day, to give time for Ramona to recover, and appear as a witness. He impressed upon the Indians as strongly as he could the importance of having her appear. It was evident that Farrar's account of the affair was false from first to last. Alessandro had no knife. He had not had time to go many steps from the door; the volley of oaths, and the two shots almost simultaneously, were what Ramona heard as she ran to the door. Alessandro could not have spoken many words.

The day for the hearing came. Farrar had been, during the interval, in a merely nominal custody; having been allowed to go about his business, on his own personal guarantee of appearing in time for the trial. It was with a strange mixture of regret and relief that Judge Wells saw the hour of the trial arrive, and not a witness on the ground except Farrar himself. That Farrar was a brutal ruffian, the whole country knew. This last outrage was only one of a long series; the judge would have been glad to have committed him for trial, and have seen him get his deserts. But San Jacinto Valley, wild, sparsely settled as it was, had yet as fixed standards and criterions of popularity as the most civilized of communities could show; and to betray sympathy with Indians was more than any man's political head was worth. The word "justice" had

lost its meaning, if indeed it ever had any, so far as they were concerned. The valley was a unit on that question, however divided it might be upon others. On the whole, the judge was relieved, though it was not without a bitter twinge, as of one accessory after the deed, and unfaithful to a friend; for he had known Alessandro well. Yet, on the whole, he was relieved when he was forced to accede to the motion made by Farrar's counsel, that "the prisoner be discharged on ground of justifiable homicide, no witnesses having appeared against him."

He comforted himself by thinking — what was no doubt true — that even if the case had been brought to a jury trial, the result would have been the same; for there would never have been found a San Diego County jury that would convict a white man of murder for killing an Indian, if there were no witnesses to the occurrence except the Indian wife. But he derived small comfort from this. Alessandro's face haunted him, and also the memory of Ramona's, as she lay tossing and moaning in the wretched Cahuilla hovel. He knew that only her continued illness, or her death, could explain her not having come to the trial. The Indians would have brought her in their arms all the way, if she had been alive and in possession of her senses.

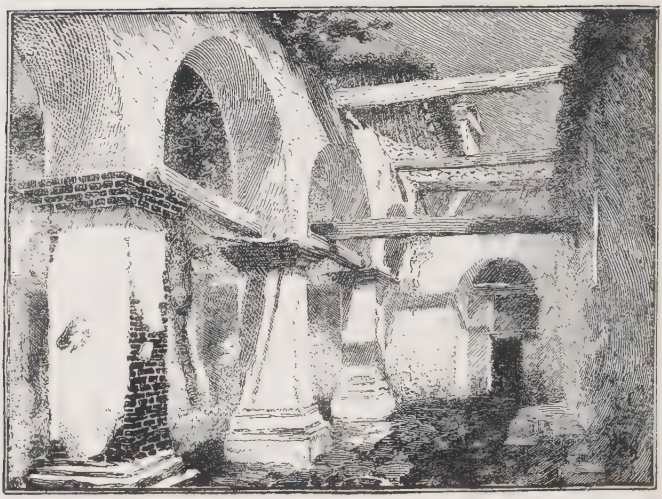
During the summer that she and Alessandro had lived in Saboba he had seen her many times, and had been impressed by her rare quality. His chil-

dren knew her and loved her; had often been in her house; his wife had bought her embroidery. Alessandro also had worked for him; and no one knew better than Judge Wells that Alessandro in his senses was as incapable of stealing a horse as any white man in the valley. Farrar knew it; everybody knew it. Everybody knew, also, about his strange fits of wandering mind; and that when these half-crazed fits came on him, he was wholly irresponsible. Farrar knew this. The only explanation of Farrar's deed was, that on seeing his horse spent and exhausted from having been forced up that terrible trail, he was seized by ungovernable rage, and fired on the second, without knowing what he did. "But he would n't have done it, if it had n't been an Indian!" mused the judge. "He 'd ha' thought twice before he shot any white man down, that way."

Day after day such thoughts as these pursued the judge, and he could not shake them off. An uneasy sense that he owed something to Ramona, or, if Ramona were dead, to the little child she had left, haunted him. There might in some such way be a sort of atonement made to the murdered, unavenged Alessandro. He might even take the child, and bring it up in his own house. That was by no means an uncommon thing in the valley. The longer he thought, the more he felt himself eased in his mind by this purpose; and he decided that as soon as he could find leisure he would

go to the Cahuilla village and see what could be done.

But it was not destined that stranger hands should bring succor to Ramona. Felipe had at last found trace of her. Felipe was on the way.



XXV

EFFECTUALLY misled by the faithful Carmena, Felipe had begun his search for Alessandro by going direct to Monterey. He found few Indians in the place, and not one had ever heard Alessandro's name. Six miles from the town was a little settlement of them, in hiding, in the bottoms of the San Carlos River, near the old Mission. The Catholic priest advised him to search there; sometimes, he said, fugitives of one sort and another took refuge in this settlement, lived there for a few months, then disappeared as noiselessly as they had come. Felipe searched there also; equally in vain.

He questioned all the sailors in port; all the shippers. No one had heard of an Indian shipping on board any vessel; in fact, a captain would have to be in straits before he would take an Indian in his crew.

"But this was an exceptionally good worker, this Indian; he could turn his hand to anything; he might have gone as ship's carpenter."

"That might be," they said; "nobody had ever heard of any such thing, however;" and very much they all wondered what it was that made the handsome, sad Mexican gentleman so anxious to find this Indian.

Felipe wasted weeks in Monterey. Long after he had ceased to hope, he lingered. He felt as if he would like to stay till every ship that had sailed out of Monterey in the last three years had returned. Whenever he heard of one coming into harbor, he hastened to the shore, and closely watched the disembarking. His melancholy countenance, with its eager, searching look, became a familiar sight to every one; even the children knew that the pale gentleman was looking for some one he could not find. Women pitied him, and gazed at him tenderly, wondering if a man could look like that for anything save the loss of a sweetheart. Felipe made no confidences. He simply asked, day after day, of every one he met, for an Indian named Alessandro Assis.

Finally he shook himself free from the dreamy spell of the place, and turned his face southward

again. He went by the route which the Franciscan Fathers used to take, when the only road on the California coast was the one leading from Mission to Mission. Felipe had heard Father Salvierderra say that there were in the neighborhood of each of the old Missions Indian villages, or families still living. He thought it not improbable that, from Alessandro's father's long connection with the San Luis Rey Mission, Alessandro might be known to some of these Indians. He would leave no stone unturned; no Indian village unsearched; no Indian unquestioned.

San Juan Bautista came first; then Soledad, San Antonio, San Miguel, San Luis Obispo, Santa Inez; and that brought him to Santa Barbara. He had spent two months on the journey. At each of these places he found Indians; miserable, half-starved creatures, most of them. Felipe's heart ached, and he was hot with shame, at their condition. The ruins of the old Mission buildings were sad to see, but the human ruins were sadder. Now Felipe understood why Father Salvierderra's heart had broken, and why his mother had been full of such fierce indignation against the heretic usurpers and despoilers of the estates which the Franciscans once held. He could not understand why the Church had submitted, without fighting, to such indignities and robberies. At every one of the Missions he heard harrowing tales of the sufferings of those Fathers who had clung to their congregations to the last, and died at their posts. At Soledad an old Indian, weeping, showed

SALVIERDERRA

him the grave of Father Sarria, who had died there of starvation. "He gave us all he had, to the last," said the old man. "He lay on a raw-hide on the ground, as we did; and one morning, before he had finished the mass, he fell forward at the altar and was dead. And when we put him in the grave, his body was only bones, and no flesh; he had gone so long without food, to give it to us."

At all these Missions Felipe asked in vain for Alessandro. They knew very little, these northern Indians, about those in the south, they said. It was seldom one from the southern tribes came northward. They did not understand each other's speech. The more Felipe inquired, and the longer he reflected, the more he doubted Alessandro's having ever gone to Monterey. At Santa Barbara he made a long stay. The Brothers at the College welcomed him hospitably. They had heard from Father Salvierderra the sad story of Ramona, and were distressed, with Felipe, that no traces had been found of her. It grieved Father Salvierderra to the last, they said; he prayed for her daily, but said he could not get any certainty in his spirit of his prayers being heard. Only the day before he died, he had said this to Father Francis, a young Brazilian monk, to whom he was greatly attached.

In Felipe's overwrought frame of mind this seemed to him a terrible omen; and he set out on his journey with a still heavier heart than before. He believed Ramona was dead, buried in some unknown, uncon-

secrated spot, never to be found; yet he would not give up the search. As he journeyed southward, he began to find persons who had known of Alessandro; and still more, those who had known his father, old Pablo. But no one had heard anything of Alessandro's whereabouts since the driving out of his people from Temecula; there was no knowing where any of those Temecula people were now. They had scattered "like a flock of ducks," one Indian said, — "like a flock of ducks after they are fired into. You'd never see all those ducks in any one place again. The Temecula people were here, there, and everywhere, all through San Diego County. There was one Temecula man at San Juan Capistrano, however. The Señor would better see him. He no doubt knew about Alessandro. He was living in a room in the old Mission building. The priest had given it to him for taking care of the chapel and the priest's room, and a little rent besides. He was a hard man, the San Juan Capistrano priest; he would take the last dollar from a poor man."

It was late at night when Felipe reached San Juan Capistrano; but he could not sleep till he had seen this man. Here was the first clew he had gained. He found the man, with his wife and children, in a large corner room opening on the inner court of the Mission quadrangle. The room was dark and damp as a cellar; a fire smouldered in the enormous fireplace; a few skins and rags were piled near the hearth, and on these lay the woman, evidently ill.

The sunken tile floor was icy cold to the feet; the wind swept in at a dozen broken places in the corridor side of the wall; there was not an article of furniture. "Heavens!" thought Felipe, as he entered, "a priest of our Church take rent for such a hole as this!"

There was no light in the place, except the little which came from the fire. "I am sorry I have no candle, Señor," said the man, as he came forward. "My wife is sick, and we are very poor."

"No matter," said Felipe, his hand already at his purse. "I only want to ask you a few questions. You are from Temecula, they tell me."

"Yes, Señor," the man replied in a dogged tone, — no man of Temecula could yet hear the word without a pang, — "I was of Temecula."

"I want to find one Alessandro Assis who lived there. You knew him, I suppose," said Felipe, eagerly.

At this moment a brand broke in the smouldering fire, and for one second a bright blaze shot up; only for a second, then all was dark again. But the swift blaze had fallen on Felipe's face, and with a start which he could not control, but which Felipe did not see, the Indian had recognized him. "Ha, ha!" he thought to himself. "Señor Felipe Moreno, you come to the wrong house asking for news of Alessandro Assis!"

It was Antonio, — Antonio, who had been at the Moreno sheep-shearing; Antonio, who knew even

more than Carmena had known, for he knew what a marvel and miracle it seemed that the beautiful Señorita from the Moreno house should have loved Alessandro, and wedded him; and he knew that on the night she went away with him, Alessandro had lured out of the corral a beautiful horse for her to ride. Alessandro had told him all about it, — Baba, fiery, splendid Baba, black as night, with a white star in his forehead. Saints! but it was a bold thing to do, to steal such a horse as that, with a star for a mark; and no wonder that even now, though near three years afterwards, Señor Felipe was in search of him. Of course it could be only the horse he wanted. Ha! much help might he get from Antonio!

"Yes, Señor, I knew him," he replied.

"Do you know where he is now?"

"No, Señor."

"Do you know where he went, from Temecula?"

"No, Señor."

"A woman told me he went to Monterey. I have been there looking for him."

"I heard, too, he had gone to Monterey."

"Where did you see him last?"

"In Temecula."

"Was he alone?"

"Yes, Señor."

"Did you ever hear of his being married?"

"No, Señor."

"Where are the greater part of the Temecula people now?"

"Like this, Señor," with a bitter gesture, pointing to his wife. "Most of us are beggars. A few here, a few there. Some have gone to Capitan Grande, some way down into Lower California."

Wearily Felipe continued his bootless questioning. No suspicion that the man was deceiving him crossed his mind. At last, with a sigh, he said, "I hoped to have found Alessandro by your means. I am greatly disappointed."

"I doubt not that, Señor Felipe Moreno," thought Antonio. "I am sorry, Señor," he said.

It smote his conscience when Felipe laid in his hand a generous gold-piece, and said, "Here is a bit of money for you. I am sorry to see you so poorly off."

The thanks which he spoke sounded hesitating and gruff, so remorseful did he feel. Señor Felipe had always been kind to them. How well they had fared always in his house! It was a shame to lie to him; yet the first duty was to Alessandro. It could not be avoided. And thus a second time help drifted away from Ramona.

At Temecula, from Mrs. Hartsel, Felipe got the first true intelligence of Alessandro's movements; but at first it only confirmed his worst forebodings. Alessandro had been at Mrs. Hartsel's house; he had been alone, and on foot; he was going to walk all the way to San Pasquale, where he had the promise of work.

How sure the kindly woman was that she was

telling the exact truth. After long ransacking of her memory and comparing of events, she fixed the time so nearly to the true date, that it was to Felipe's mind a terrible corroboration of his fears. It was, he thought, about a week after Ramona's flight from home that Alessandro had appeared thus, alone, on foot, at Mrs. Hartsel's. In great destitution, she said; and she had lent him money on the expectation of selling his violin; but they had never sold it; there it was yet. And that Alessandro was dead, she had no more doubt than that she herself was alive; for else, he would have come back to pay her what he owed. The honestest fellow that ever lived, was Alessandro. Did not the Señor Moreno think so? Had he not found him so always? There were not many such Indians as Alessandro and his father. If there had been, it would have been better for their people. "If they'd all been like Alessandro, I tell you," she said, "it would have taken more than any San Diego sheriff to have put them out of their homes here."

"But what could they do to help themselves, Mrs. Hartsel?" asked Felipe. "The law was against them. We can't any of us go against that. I myself have lost half my estate in the same way."

"Well, at any rate they would n't have gone without fighting!" she said. "'If Alessandro had been here!' they all said."

Felipe asked to see the violin. "But that is not Alessandro's," he exclaimed. "I have seen his."

"No!" she said. "Did I say it was his? It was

his father's. One of the Indians brought it in here to hide it with us at the time they were driven out. It is very old, they say, and worth a great deal of money, if you could find the right man to buy it. But he has not come along yet. He will, though. I am not a bit afraid but that we 'll get our money back on it. If Alessandro was alive, he 'd have been here long before this."

Finding Mrs. Hartsel thus friendly, Felipe suddenly decided to tell her the whole story. Surprise and incredulity almost overpowered her at first. She sat buried in thought for some minutes; then she sprang to her feet, and cried: "If he 's got that girl with him, he 's hiding somewhere. There 's nothing like an Indian to hide; and if he is hiding, every other Indian knows it, and you just waste your breath asking any questions of any of them. They will die before they will tell you one thing. They are as secret as the grave. And they, every one of them, worshipped Alessandro. You see they thought he would be over them, after Pablo, and they were all proud of him because he could read and write, and knew more than most of them. If I were in your place," she continued, "I would not give it up yet. I should go to San Pasquale. Now it might just be that she was along with him that night he stopped here, hid somewhere, while he came in to get the money. I know I urged him to stay all night, and he said he could not do it. I don't know, though, where he could possibly have left her while he came here."

Never in all her life had Mrs. Hartsel been so puzzled and so astonished as now. But her sympathy, and her confident belief that Alessandro might yet be found, gave unspeakable cheer to Felipe.

"If I find them, I shall take them home with me, Mrs. Hartsel," he said as he rode away; "and we will come by this road and stop to see you." And the very speaking of the words cheered him all the way to San Pasquale.

But before he had been in San Pasquale an hour, he was plunged into a perplexity and disappointment deeper than he had yet felt. He found the village in disorder, the fields neglected, many houses deserted, the remainder of the people preparing to move away. In the house of Ysidro, Alessandro's kinsman, was living a white family, — the family of a man who had pre-empted the greater part of the land on which the village stood. Ysidro, profiting by Alessandro's example, when he found that there was no help, that the American had his papers from the land-office, in all due form, certifying that the land was his, had given the man his option of paying for the house or having it burned down. The man had bought the house; and it was only the week before Felipe arrived, that Ysidro had set off, with all his goods and chattels, for Mesa Grande. He might possibly have told the Señor more, the people said, than any one now in the village could; but even Ysidro did not know where Alessandro intended to settle. He

told no one. He went to the north. That was all they knew.

To the north! That north which Felipe thought he had thoroughly searched. He sighed at the word. The Señor could, if he liked, see the house in which Alessandro had lived. There it was, on the south side of the valley, just in the edge of the foot-hills; some Americans lived in it now. Such a good ranch Alessandro had; the best wheat in the valley. The American had paid Alessandro something for it, — they did not know how much; but Alessandro was very lucky to get anything. If only they had listened to him. He was always telling them this would come. Now it was too late for most of them to get anything for their farms. One man had taken the whole of the village lands, and he had bought Ysidro's house because it was the best; and so they would not get anything. They were utterly disheartened, broken-spirited.

In his sympathy for them, Felipe almost forgot his own distresses. "Where are you going?" he asked of several.

"Who knows, Señor?" was their reply. "Where can we go? There is no place."

When, in reply to his questions in regard to Alessandro's wife, Felipe heard her spoken of as "Majella," his perplexity deepened. Finally he asked if no one had ever heard the name Ramona.

"Never."

What could it mean? Could it be possible that

this was another Alessandro than the one of whom he was in search? Felipe bethought himself of a possible marriage-record. Did they know where Alessandro had married this wife of his, of whom every word they spoke seemed both like and unlike Ramona?

Yes. It was in San Diego they had been married, by Father Gaspara.

Hoping against hope, the baffled Felipe rode on to San Diego; and here, as ill-luck would have it, he found, not Father Gaspara, who would at his first word have understood all, but a young Irish priest, who had only just come to be Father Gaspara's assistant. Father Gaspara was away in the mountains, at Santa Ysabel. But the young assistant would do equally well, to examine the records. He was courteous and kind; brought out the tattered old book, and, looking over his shoulder, his breath coming fast with excitement and fear, there Felipe read, in Father Gaspara's hasty and blotted characters, the fatal entry of the names, "Alessandro Assis and Majella Fa —"

Heart-sick, Felipe went away. Most certainly Ramona would never have been married under any but her own name. Who, then, was this woman whom Alessandro Assis had married in less than ten days from the night on which Ramona had left her home? Some Indian woman for whom he felt compassion, or to whom he was bound by previous ties? And where, in what lonely, forever hidden spot, was the grave of Ramona?

Now at last Felipe felt sure that she was dead. It was useless searching farther. Yet, after he reached home, his restless conjectures took one more turn, and he sat down and wrote a letter to every priest between San Diego and Monterey, asking if there were on his books a record of the marriage of one Alessandro Assis and Ramona Ortegna.

It was not impossible that there might be, after all, another Alessandro Assis. The old Fathers, in baptizing their tens of thousands of Indian converts, were sore put to it to make out names enough. There might have been another Assis besides old Pablo, and of Alessandros there were dozens everywhere.

This last faint hope also failed. No record anywhere of an Alessandro Assis, except in Father Gaspara's book.

As Felipe was riding out of San Pasquale, he had seen an Indian man and woman walking by the side of mules heavily laden. Two little children, too young or too feeble to walk, were so packed in among the bundles that their faces were the only part of them in sight. The woman was crying bitterly. "More of these exiles. God help the poor creatures!" thought Felipe; and he pulled out his purse, and gave the woman a piece of gold. She looked up in as great astonishment as if the money had fallen from the skies. "Thanks! Thanks, Señor!" she exclaimed; and the man coming up to Felipe said also, "God reward you, Señor! That is more money than I

had in the world! Does the Señor know of any place where I could get work?"

Felipe longed to say, "Yes, come to my estate; there you shall have work!" In the olden time he would have done it without a second thought, for both the man and the woman had good faces, — were young and strong. But the pay-roll of the Moreno estate was even now too long for its dwindled fortunes. "No, my man, I am sorry to say I do not," he answered. "I live a long way from here. Where were you thinking of going?"

"Somewhere in San Jacinto," said the man. "They say the Americans have not come in there much yet. I have a brother living there. Thanks, Señor; may the saints reward you!"

"San Jacinto!" After Felipe returned home, the name haunted his thoughts. The grand mountain-top bearing that name he had known well in many a distant horizon. "Juan Can," he said one day, "are there many Indians in San Jacinto?"

"The mountain?" said Juan Can.

"Ay, I suppose, the mountain," said Felipe. "What else is there?"

"The valley, too," replied Juan. "The San Jacinto Valley is a fine, broad valley, though the river is not much to be counted on. It is mostly dry sand a good part of the year. But there is good grazing. There is one village of Indians I know in the valley; some of the San Luis Rey Indians came from there; and up on the mountain is a big village; the wildest

Indians in all the country live there. Oh, they are fierce, Señor!"

The next morning Felipe set out for San Jacinto. Why had no one mentioned, why had he not himself known, of these villages? Perhaps there were yet others he had not heard of. Hope sprang in Felipe's impressionable nature as easily as it died. An hour, a moment, might see him both lifted up and cast down. When he rode into the sleepy little village street of San Bernardino, and saw, in the near horizon, against the southern sky, a superb mountain-peak, changing in the sunset lights from turquoise to ruby, and from ruby to turquoise again, he said to himself, "She is there! I have found her!"

The sight of the mountain affected him, as it had always affected Aunt Ri, with an indefinable, solemn sense of something revealed, yet hidden. "San Jacinto?" he said to a bystander, pointing to it with his whip.

"Yes, Señor," replied the man. As he spoke, a pair of black horses came whirling round the corner, and he sprang to one side, narrowly escaping being knocked down. "That Tennessee fellow 'll run over somebody yet, with those black devils of his, if he don't look out," he muttered, as he recovered his balance.

Felipe glanced at the horses, then driving his spurs deep into his horse's sides, galloped after them. "Baba! by God!" he cried aloud in his excitement; and forgetful of everything, he urged his horse faster,

shouting as he rode, "Stop that man! Stop that man with the black horses!"

Jos, hearing his name called on all sides, reined in Benito and Baba as soon as he could, and looked around in bewilderment to see what had happened. Before he had time to ask any questions, Felipe had overtaken him, and riding straight to Baba's head, had flung himself from his own horse and taken Baba by the rein, crying, "Baba! Baba!" Baba knew his voice, and began to whinny and plunge. Felipe was nearly unmanned. For the second, he forgot everything. A crowd was gathering around them. It had never been quite clear to the San Bernardino mind that Jos's title to Benito and Baba would bear looking into; and it was no surprise, therefore, to some of the on-lookers, to hear Felipe cry in a loud voice, looking suspiciously at Jos, "How did you get him?"

Jos was a wag, and Jos was never hurried. The man did not live, nor could the occasion arrive, which would quicken his constitutional drawl. Before even beginning his answer he crossed one leg over the other and took a long, observant look at Felipe; then in a pleasant voice he said: "Wall, Señor,—I allow yer air a Señor by yer color,—it would take right smart uv time tew tell yeow haow I cum by thet hoss, 'n' by the other one tew. They ain't mine, neither one on 'em."

Jos's speech was as unintelligible to Felipe as it had been to Ramona. Jos saw it, and chuckled.

"Mebbe 't would holp yer tew understand me ef I wuz tew talk Mexican," he said, and proceeded to repeat in tolerably good Spanish the sum and substance of what he had just said, adding: "They belong to an Indian over on San Jacinto; at least, the off one does; the nigh one's his wife's; he would n't ever call thet one anything but hers. It had been hers ever sence she was a girl, they said. I never saw people think so much of horses as they did."

Before Jos had finished speaking, Felipe had bounded into the wagon, throwing his horse's reins to a boy in the crowd, and crying, "Follow along with my horse, will you? I must speak to this man."

Found! Found, — the saints be praised, — at last! How should he tell this man fast enough? How should he thank him enough?

Laying his hand on Jos's knee, he cried: "I can't explain to you; I can't tell you. Bless you forever, — forever! It must be the saints led you here!"

"Oh, Lawd!" thought Jos; "another o' them 'saint' fellers! I allow not, Señor," he said, relapsing into Tennesseean. "It wur Tom Wurmsee led me; I wuz gwine ter move his truck fur him this arternoon."

"Take me home with you to your house," said Felipe, still trembling with excitement; "we cannot talk here in the street. I want to hear all you can

tell me about them. I have been searching for them all over California."

Jos's face lighted up. This meant good fortune for that gentle, sweet Ramona, he was sure. "I'll take you straight there," he said; "but first I must stop at Tom's. He will be waiting for me."

The crowd dispersed, disappointed; cheated out of their anticipated scene of an arrest for horse-stealing. "Good for you, Tennessee!" and, "Fork over that black horse, Jos!" echoed from the departing groups. Sensations were not so common in San Bernardino that they could afford to slight so notable an occasion as this.

As Jos turned the corner into the street where he lived, he saw his mother coming at a rapid run towards them, her sun-bonnet half off her head, her spectacles pushed up in her hair.

"Why, thar's mammy!" he exclaimed. "What ever hez gone wrong naow?"

Before he finished speaking, she saw the black horses, and snatching her bonnet from her head waved it wildly, crying, "Yeow Jos! Jos, hyar! Stop! I wuz er comin' ter hunt yer!"

Breathlessly she continued talking, her words half lost in the sound of the wheels. Apparently she did not see the stranger sitting by Jos's side. "Oh, Jos, thar's the terriblest news come! Thet Injun Alessandro's got killed; murdered; jest murdered, I say; 't ain't no less. Thar wuz an Injun come down from ther mounting with a letter to the Agent."

"Good God! Alessandro killed!" burst from Felipe's lips in a heart-rending voice.

Jos looked bewilderedly from his mother to Felipe; the complication was almost beyond him. "Oh, Lawd!" he gasped. Turning to Felipe, "Thet's mammy," he said. "She wuz real fond o' both on 'em." Turning to his mother, "This hyar's her brother," he said. "He jest knowed me by Baba, hyar on ther street. He's been huntin' 'em everywhar."

Aunt Ri grasped the situation instantly. Wiping her streaming eyes, she sobbed out: "Wall, I'll allow, arter this, thar is sech a thing ez a Providence, ez they call it. 'Pears like ther could n't ennythin' less brung yer hyar jest naow. I know who yer be; ye 're her brother Feeleepy, ain't yer? Menny's ther time she's tolt me about yer! Oh, Lawd! How air we ever goin' to git ter her? I allow she's dead! I allow she'd never live arter seein' him shot down dead! He tolt me thar could n't nobody git up thar whar they 'd gone; no white folks, I mean. Oh, Lawd, Lawd!"

Felipe stood paralyzed, horror-stricken. He turned in despair to Jos. "Tell me in Spanish," he said. "I cannot understand."

As Jos gradually drew out the whole story from his mother's excited and incoherent speech, and translated it, Felipe groaned aloud, "Too late! Too late!" He too felt, as Aunt Ri had, that Ramona never could have survived the shock of seeing her hus-

band murdered. "Too late! Too late!" he cried, as he staggered into the house. "She has surely died of the sight."

"I allow she did n't die, nuther," said Jos; "not ser long ez she hed thet young un to look arter!"

"Yer air right, Jos!" said Aunt Ri. "I allow yer air right. Thar could n't nothin' kill her, short er wild beasts, ef she hed ther baby 'n her arms! She ain't dead, not ef the baby ez erlive, I allow. Thet 's some comfort."

Felipe sat with his face buried in his hands. Suddenly looking up, he said, "How far is it?"

"Thirty miles 'n' more inter the valley, where we wuz," said Jos, "'n' the Lawd knows how fur 't is up on ter the mounting, where they wuz livin'. It 's like goin' up the wall uv a house, goin' up San Jacinto Mounting, daddy sez. He wuz thar huntin' all summer with Alessandro."

How strange, how incredible it seemed, to hear Alessandro's name thus familiarly spoken, — spoken by persons who had known him so recently, and who were grieving, grieving as friends, to hear of his terrible death! Felipe felt as if he were in a trance. Rousing himself, he said, "We must go. We must start at once. You will let me have the horses?"

"Wall, I allow yer 've got more right ter 'em 'n —" began Jos, energetically, forgetting himself; then, dropping Tennesseean, he completed in Spanish his cordial assurances that the horses were at Felipe's command.

"Jos! He 's got ter take me!" cried Aunt Ri. "I allow I ain't never gwine ter set still hyar, 'n' thet girl inter sech trouble; 'n' if so be ez she is reely dead, thar 's the baby. He hed n't orter go alone by hisself."

Felipe was thankful, indeed, for Aunt Ri's companionship, and expressed himself in phrases so warm, that she was embarrassed.

"Yeow tell him, Jos," she said, "I can't never git used ter bein' called Señory. Yeow tell him his sister allers called me Aunt Ri, 'n' I jest wish he would. I allow me 'n' him 'll git along all right. 'Pears like I 'd known him all my days, jest ez 't did with her, arter the fust. I 'm free to confess I take more ter these Mexicans than I do ter these low-down, driven Yankees, ennyhow, — a heap more; but I can't stand bein' Señory'd! Yeow tell him, Jos. I s'pose thar 's a word for 'aunt' in Mexican, ain't there? 'Pears like thar could n't be no langwedge 'thout sech a word! He 'll know what it means! I 'd go off with him a heap easier ef he 'd call me jest plain Aunt Ri, ez I 'm used ter, or Mis Hyer, either un on 'em; but Aunt Ri 's the nateralest."

Jos had some anxiety about his mother's memory of the way to San Jacinto. She laughed.

"Don't yeow be a mite oneasy," she said. "I bet yeow I 'd go clean back ter the States ther way we cum. I allow I 've got every mile on 't 'n my hed plain 's a turnpike. Yeow nor yer dad, neiry

one on yer, could n't begin to do 't. But what we air gwine ter do, fur gittin' up the mounting, thet 's another thing. Thet 's more 'n I dew know. But thar 'll be a way pervided, Jos, sure 's yeow 're bawn. The Lawd ain't gwine to git hisself hindered er holpin' Ramony this time; I ain't a mite afeerd."

Felipe could not have found a better ally. The comparative silence enforced between them by reason of lack of a common vehicle for their thoughts was on the whole less of a disadvantage than would have at first appeared. They understood each other well enough for practical purposes, and their unity in aim, and in affection for Ramona, made a bond so strong, it could not have been enhanced by words.

It was past sundown when they left San Bernardino, but a full moon made the night as good as day for their journey. When it first shone out, Aunt Ri, pointing to it, said curtly, "Thet 's lucky."

"Yes," replied Felipe, who did not know either of the words she had spoken, "it is good. It shows to us the way."

"Thar, naow, say he can't understand English!" thought Aunt Ri.

Benito and Baba travelled as if they knew the errand on which they were hurrying. Good forty miles they had gone without flagging once, when Aunt Ri, pointing to a house on the right hand of the road, the only one they had seen for many miles, said: "We 'll hev to sleep hyar. I donno

the road beyant this. I allow they 're gone ter bed; but they 'll hev to git up 'n' take us in. They 're used ter doin' it. They dew consid'able business keepin' movers. I know 'em. They 're reel friendly fur the kind o' people they air. They 're druv to death. It can't be far frum their time to git up, ennyhow. They 're up every mornin' uv thar lives long afore daylight, a feedin' their stock, an' gittin' ready fur the day's work. I used ter hear 'em 'n' see 'em, when we wuz campin' here. The fust I saw uv it, I thought somebody wuz sick in the house, to git 'em up thet time o' night; but arterwards we found out 't wan't nothin' but thar reggerlar way. When I told dad, sez I, 'Dad, did ever yer hear sech a thing uz gittin' up afore light to feed stock?' 'n' ter feed theirselves tew. They 'd their own breakfast all clared away, 'n' dishes washed, too, afore light; 'n' prayers said beside; they 're Methodys, terrible pious. I used ter tell dad they talked a heap about believin' in God; I don't allow but what they dew believe in God, tew, but they don't worship Him so much 's they worship work; not nigh so much. Believin' 'n' worshippin' 's tew things. Yeow would n't see no sech doin's in Tennessee. I allow the Lawd meant some time fur sleepin'; 'n' I 'm satisfied with his times o' lightin' up. But these Merrills air reel nice folks, fur all this I 've ben tellin' yer! — Lawd! I don't believe he 's understood a word I 've said, naow!" thought Aunt Ri to herself, suddenly be-

coming aware of the hopeless bewilderment on Felipe's face. "'T ain't much use sayin' anything more 'n plain yes 'n' no, between folks thet can't understand each other's langwedge; 'n' 's fur 's thet goes, I allow thar ain't any gret use 'n the biggest part o' what 's sed between folks thet doos!"

When the Merrill family learned Felipe's purpose of going up the mountain to the Cahuilla village, they attempted to dissuade him from taking his own horses. He would kill them both, high-spirited horses like those, they said, if he took them over that road. It was a cruel road. They pointed out to him the line where it wound, doubling and tacking on the sides of precipices, like a path for a goat or chamois. Aunt Ri shuddered at the sight, but said nothing.

"I'm gwine whar he goes," she said grimly to herself. "I ain't a gwine ter back daown naow; but I dew jest wish Jeff Hyer wuz along."

Felipe himself disliked what he saw and heard of the grade. The road had been built for bringing down lumber, and for six miles it was at perilous angles. After this it wound along on ridges and in ravines till it reached the heart of a great pine forest, where stood a saw-mill. Passing this, it plunged into still darker, denser woods, some fifteen miles farther on, and then came out among vast opens, meadows, and grassy foot-hills, still on the majestic mountain's northern or eastern slopes. From these, another steep road, little more than

a trail, led south, and up to the Cahuilla village. A day and a half's hard journey, at the shortest, it was from Merrill's; and no one unfamiliar with the country could find the last part of the way without a guide. Finally it was arranged that one of the younger Merrills should go in this capacity, and should also take two of his strongest horses, accustomed to the road. By the help of these the terrible ascent was made without difficulty, though Baba at first snorted, plunged, and resented the humiliation of being harnessed with his head at another horse's tail.

Except for their sad errand, both Felipe and Aunt Ri would have experienced a keen delight in this ascent. With each fresh lift on the precipitous terraces, the view off to the south and west broadened, until the whole San Jacinto Valley lay unrolled at their feet. The pines were grand; standing, they seemed shapely columns; fallen, the upper curve of their huge yellow disks came above a man's head, so massive was their size. On many of them the bark had been riddled from root to top, as by myriads of bullet-holes. In each hole had been cunningly stored away an acorn,—the woodpeckers' granaries.

"Look at thet, naow!" exclaimed the observant Aunt Ri; "an' thar's folks thet sez dumb critters ain't got brains. They ain't noways dumb to each other, I notice; an' we air dumb aourselves when we air ketched with furriners. I allow I'm next door to dumb myself with this hyar Mexican I'm er travellin' with."

"That's so!" replied Sam Merrill. "When we fust got here, I thought I 'd ha' gone clean out o' my head tryin' to make these Mexicans sense my meanin'; my tongue was plaguy little use to me. But now I can talk their lingo fust-rate; but pa, he can't talk to 'em nohow; he hain't learned the fust word; 'n' he 's ben here goin' on two years longer 'n we have."

The miles seemed leagues to Felipe. Aunt Ri's drawling tones, as she chatted volubly with young Merrill, chafed him. How could she chatter! But when he thought this, it would chance that in a few moments more he would see her clandestinely wiping away tears, and his heart would warm to her again.

They slept at a miserable cabin in one of the clearings, and at early dawn pushed on, reaching the Cahuilla village before noon. As their carriage came in sight, a great running to and fro of people was to be seen. Such an event as the arrival of a comfortable carriage drawn by four horses had never before taken place in the village. The agitation into which the people had been thrown by the murder of Alessandro had by no means subsided; they were all on the alert, suspicious of each new occurrence. The news had only just reached the village that Farrar had been set at liberty, and would not be punished for his crime, and the flames of indignation and desire for vengeance, which the aged Capitan had so much difficulty in allaying in the outset, were bursting forth again this morning. It was therefore a crowd of

hostile and lowering faces which gathered around the carriage as it stopped in front of the Capitan's house.

Aunt Ri's face was a ludicrous study of mingled terror, defiance, and contempt. "Uv all ther low-down, no-'count, beggarly trash ever I laid eyes on," she said in a low tone to Merrill, "I allow these yere air the wust! But I allow they 'd flatten us all aout in jest abaout a minnit, ef they wuz to set aout tew! Ef she ain't hyar, we air in a scrape, I allow."

"Oh, they 're friendly enough," laughed Merrill. "They 're all stirred up, now, about the killin' o' that Injun; that 's what makes 'em look so fierce. I don't wonder! 'T was a derned mean thing Jim Farrar did, a firin' into the man after he was dead. I don't blame him for killin' the cuss, not a bit; I 'd have shot any man livin' that 'ad taken a good horse o' mine up that trail. That 's the only law we stock men 've got out in this country. We 've got to protect ourselves. But it was a mean, low-lived trick to blow the feller's face to pieces after he was dead; but Jim 's a rough feller, 'n' I expect he was so mad, when he see his horse, that he did n't know what he did."

Aunt Ri was half paralyzed with astonishment at this speech. Felipe had leaped out of the carriage, and after a few words with the old Capitan, had hurried with him into his house. Felipe had evidently forgotten that she was still in the carriage. His going into the house looked as if Ramona were there. Aunt Ri, in all her indignation and astonishment,

was conscious of this train of thought running through her mind; but not even the near prospect of seeing Ramona could bridle her tongue now, or make her defer replying to the extraordinary statements she had just heard. The words seemed to choke her as she began. "Young man," she said, "I donno much abaout yeour raisin'. I've heered yeour folks wuz great on religion. Naow, we ain't, Jeff 'n' me; we war n't raised thet way; but I allow ef I wuz ter hear my boy, Jos, — he 's jest abaout yeour age, 'n' make tew, though he 's narrerer chested, — ef I should hear him say what yeou 've jest said, I allow I sh'd expect to see him struck by lightnin'; 'n' I sh'd n't think he hed got more 'n his deserts, I allow I sh'd n't!"

What more Aunt Ri would have said to the astounded Merrill was never known, for at that instant the old Capitan, returning to the door, beckoned to her; and springing from her seat to the ground, sternly rejecting Sam's offered hand, she hastily entered the house. As she crossed the threshold, Felipe turned an anguished face towards her, and said, "Come, speak to her." He was on his knees by a wretched pallet on the floor. Was that Ramona, — that prostrate form; hair dishevelled, eyes glittering, cheeks scarlet, hands playing meaninglessly, like the hands of one crazed, with a rosary of gold beads? Yes, it was Ramona; and it was like this she had lain there now ten days; and the people had exhausted all their simple skill for her in vain.

Aunt Ri burst into tears. "Oh, Lawd!" she said.

"Ef I had some 'old man' hyar, I'd bring her aout er thet fever! I dew bleeve I seed some on 't growin' not more 'n er mile back." And without a second look, or another word, she ran out of the door, and springing into the carriage, said, speaking faster than she had been heard to speak for thirty years: "Yeow jest turn raound 'n' drive me back a piece, the way we come. I allow I'll git a weed thet 'll break thet fever. Faster, faster! Run yer hosses. 'T ain't above er mile back, whar I seed it," she cried, leaning out, eagerly scrutinizing each inch of the barren ground. "Stop! Here 't is!" she cried. "I knowed I smelt the bitter on 't somewhars along hyar;" and in a few minutes more she had a mass of the soft, shining, gray, feathery leaves in her hands, and was urging the horses fiercely on their way back. "This 'll cure her, ef ennything will," she said, as she entered the room again; but her heart sank as she saw Ramona's eyes roving restlessly over Felipe's face, no sign of recognition in them. "She 's bad;" she said, her lips trembling; "but, 'Never say die!' ez allers our motto; 't ain't never tew late fur ennything but oncet, 'n' yer can't tell when thet time 's come till it 's past 'n' gone."

Steaming bowls of the bitterly odorous infusion she held at Ramona's nostrils; with infinite patience she forced drop after drop of it between the unconscious lips; she bathed the hands and head, her own hands blistered by the heat. It was a fight with death; but love and life won. Before night Ramona was asleep.

Felipe and Aunt Ri sat by her, strange but not uncongenial watchers, each taking heart from the other's devotion. All night long Ramona slept. As Felipe watched her, he remembered his own fever, and how she had knelt by his bed and prayed there. He glanced around the room. In a niche in the mud wall was a cheap print of the Madonna, one candle just smouldering out before it. The village people had drawn heavily on their poverty-stricken stores, keeping candles burning for Alessandro and Ramona during the past ten days. The rosary had slipped from Ramona's hold; taking it cautiously in his hand, Felipe went to the Madonna's picture, and falling on his knees, began to pray as simply as if he were alone. The Indians, standing on the doorway, also fell on their knees, and a low-whispered murmur was heard.

For a moment Aunt Ri looked at the kneeling figures with contempt. "Oh, Lawd!" she thought, "the pore heathen, prayin' ter a picter!" Then a sudden revulsion seized her. "I allow I ain't gwine ter be the unly one out er the hull number thet don't seem to hev nothin' ter pray ter; I allow I 'll jine in prayer, tew, but I shan't say mine ter no picter!" And Aunt Ri fell on her knees; and when a young Indian woman by her side slipped a rosary into her hand, Aunt Ri did not repulse it, but hid it in the folds of her gown till the prayers were done. It was a moment and a lesson Aunt Ri never forgot.

XXVI

THE Capitan's house faced the east. Just as day broke, and the light streamed in at the open door, Ramona's eyes unclosed. Felipe and Aunt Ri were both by her side. With a look of bewildered terror, she gazed at them.

"Thar, thar, naow! Yer jest shet yer eyes 'n' go right off ter sleep agin, honey," said Aunt Ri, composedly, laying her hand on Ramona's eyelids, and compelling them down. "We air hyar, Feeleepy 'n' me, 'n' we air goin' ter stay. I allow yer need n't be afeerd o' nothin'. Go ter sleep, honey."

The eyelids quivered beneath Aunt Ri's fingers. Tears forced their way, and rolled slowly down the

cheeks. The lips trembled; the voice strove to speak, but it was only like the ghost of a whisper, the faint question that came, — "Felipe?"

"Yes, dear! I am here, too," breathed Felipe; "go to sleep. We will not leave you!"

And again Ramona sank away into the merciful sleep which was saving her life.

"Ther longer she kin sleep, ther better," said Aunt Ri, with a sigh, deep-drawn like a groan. "I allow I dread ter see her reely come to. 'T 'll be wus 'n the fust; she 'll hev ter live it all over agin!"

But Aunt Ri did not know what forces of fortitude had been gathering in Ramona's soul during these last bitter years. Out of her gentle constancy had been woven the heroic fibre of which martyrs are made; this, and her inextinguishable faith, had made her strong, as were those of old, who "had trial of cruel mocking, wandered about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented, wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth."

When she waked the second time, it was with a calm, almost beatific smile that she gazed on Felipe, and whispered, "How did you find me, dear Felipe?" It was rather by the motions of her lips than by any sound that he knew the words. She had not yet strength enough to make an audible sound. When they laid her baby on her breast, she smiled again, and tried to embrace her, but was too weak. Pointing to the baby's eyes, she whispered, gazing earnestly at Felipe, "Alessandro." A convulsion passed

over her face as she spoke the word, and the tears flowed.

Felipe could not speak. He glanced helplessly at Aunt Ri, who promptly responded: "Naow, honey, don't yeow talk. 'T ain't good fur ye; 'n' Feeleepy 'n' me, we air in a powerful hurry ter git yer strong 'n' well, 'n' tote ye out er this —" Aunt Ri stopped. No substantive in her vocabulary answered her need at that moment. "I allow ye kin go 'n a week, ef nothin' don't go agin ye more 'n I see naow; but ef yer git ter talkin', thar's no tellin' when yer 'll git up. Yeow jest shet up, honey. We 'll look arter everythin'."

Feebly Ramona turned her grateful, inquiring eyes on Felipe. Her lips framed the words, "With you?"

"Yes, dear, home with me," said Felipe, clasping her hand in his. "I have been searching for you all this time."

An anxious look came into the sweet face. Felipe knew what it meant. How often he had seen it in the olden time. He feared to shock her by the sudden mention of the Señora's death; yet that would harm her less than continued anxiety. "I am alone, dear Ramona," he whispered. "There is no one now but you, my sister, to take care of me. My mother has been dead a year."

The eyes dilated, then filled with sympathetic tears. "Dear Felipe!" she sighed; but her heart took courage. Felipe's phrase was like one inspired; another duty, another work, another loyalty, waiting

for Ramona. Not only her child to live for, but to "take care of Felipe"! Ramona would not die! Youth, a mother's love, a sister's affection and duty, on the side of life, — the battle was won, and won quickly, too.

To the simple Cahuillas it seemed like a miracle; and they looked on Aunt Ri's weather-beaten face with something akin to a superstitious reverence. They themselves were not ignorant of the value of the herb by means of which she had wrought the marvellous cure; but they had made repeated experiments with it upon Ramona, without success. It must be that there had been some potent spell in Aunt Ri's handling. They would hardly believe her when, in answer to their persistent questioning, she reiterated the assertion that she had used nothing except the hot water and "old man," which was her name for the wild wormwood; and which, when explained to them, impressed them greatly, as having no doubt some significance in connection with the results of her preparation of the leaves.

Rumors about Felipe ran swiftly throughout the region. The presence in the Cahuilla village of a rich Mexican gentleman who spent gold like water, and kept mounted men riding day and night, after everything, anything, he wanted for his sick sister, was an event which in the atmosphere of that lonely country loomed into colossal proportions. He had travelled all over California, with four horses, in search of her. He was only waiting till she was well,

to take her to his home in the south; and then he was going to arrest the man who had murdered her husband, and have him hanged, — yes, hanged! Small doubt about that; or, if the law cleared him, there was still the bullet. This rich Señor would see him shot, if rope were not to be had. Jim Farrar heard these tales, and quaked in his guilty soul. The rope he had small fear of, for well he knew the temper of San Diego County juries and judges; but the bullet, that was another thing: and these Mexicans were like Indians in their vengeance. Time did not tire them, and their memories were long. Farrar cursed the day he had let his temper get the better of him on that lonely mountain-side; how much the better, nobody but he himself knew, — nobody but he and Ramona: and even Ramona did not know the bitter whole. She knew that Alessandro had no knife, and had gone forward with no hostile intent; but she knew nothing beyond that. Only the murderer himself knew that the dialogue which he had reported to the judge and jury, to justify his act, was an entire fabrication of his own, and that, instead of it, had been spoken but four words by Alessandro, and those were, "Señor, I will explain;" and that even after the first shot had pierced his lungs, and the blood was choking in his throat, he had still run a step or two farther, with his hand uplifted deprecatingly, and made one more effort to speak before he fell to the ground dead. Callous as Farrar was, and clear as it was in his mind that killing an Indian was

no harm, he had not liked to recall the pleading anguish in Alessandro's tone and in his face as he fell. He had not liked to recall this, even before he heard of this rich Mexican brother-in-law who had appeared on the scene; and now, he found the memories still more unpleasant. Fear is a wonderful goad to remorse. There was another thing, too, which to his great wonder had been apparently overlooked by everybody; at least, nothing had been said about it; but the bearing of it on his case, if the case were brought up a second time and minutely investigated, would be most unfortunate. And this was, that the only clew he had to the fact of Alessandro's having taken his horse, was that the poor, half-crazed fellow had left his own well-known gray pony in the corral in place of the horse he took. A strange thing, surely, for a horse-thief to do! Cold sweat burst out on Farrar's forehead, more than once, as he realized how this, coupled with the well-known fact of Alessandro's liability to attacks of insanity, might be made to tell against him, if he should be brought to trial for the murder. He was as cowardly as he was cruel: never yet were the two traits separate in human nature; and after a few days of this torturing suspense and apprehension, he suddenly resolved to leave the country, if not forever, at least for a few years, till this brother-in-law should be out of the way. He lost no time in carrying out his resolution; and it was well he did not, for it was only three days after he had disappeared, that Felipe walked into

Judge Wells's office, one morning, to make inquiries relative to the preliminary hearing which had been held there in the matter of the murder of the Indian, Alessandro Assis, by James Farrar. And when the judge, taking down his books, read to Felipe his notes of the case, and went on to say, "If Farrar's testimony is true, Ramona's, the wife's, must be false," and "at any rate, her testimony would not be worth a straw with any jury," Felipe sprang to his feet, and cried, "She of whom you speak is my foster-sister; and, by God, Señor, if I can find that man, I will shoot him as I would a dog! And I'll see, then, if a San Diego County jury will hang me for ridding the country of such a brute!" and Felipe would have been as good as his word. It was a wise thing Farrar had done in making his escape.

When Aunt Ri heard that Farrar had fled the country, she pushed up her spectacles and looked reflectively at her informant. It was young Merrill. "Fled ther country, hez he?" she said. "Wall, he kin flee ez many countries ez he likes, an' 't won't dew him no good. I know yeow folks hyar don't seem ter think killin' an Injun 's enny murder, but I say 't is; an' yeow 'll all git it brung home ter yer afore yer die: ef 't ain't brung one way, 't 'll be anuther; yeow jest mind what I say, 'n' don't yeow furgit it. Naow this miser'ble murderer, this Farrar, thet 's lighted out er hyar, he 's nothin' more 'n a skunk, but he 's got the Lawd arter him, naow. It 's jest 's well he 's gawn; I never did b'leeve in

hangin'. I never could. It's jest tew men dead 'stead o' one. I don't want to see no man hung, no marter what he's done, 'n' I don't want to see no man shot down, nuther, no marter what he's done; 'n' this hyar Feeleepy, he's thet high-strung, he'd ha' shot thet Farrar, any minnit, quicker 'n lightnin', ef he'd ketched him; so it's better all raound he's lit aout. But I tell yeow, naow, he hain't made much by goin'! Thet Injun he murdered 'll foller him night 'n' day, till he dies, 'n' long arter; he 'll wish he wuz dead afore he doos die, I allow he will, naow. He 'll be jest like a man I knowed back in Tennessee. I wa'n't but a mite then, but I never forgot it. 'T 's a great country fur gourds, East Tennessee is, whar I wuz raised; 'n' thar wuz two houses, 'n' a fence between 'em, 'n' these gourds a runnin' all over the fence; 'n' one o' ther childun picked one o' them gourds, an' they fit abaout it; 'n' then the women took it up, — ther childun's mothers, yer know, — 'n' they got fightin' abaout it; 'n' then 't the last the men took it up, 'n' they fit; 'n' Rowell he got his butcher-knife, 'n' he ground it up, 'n' he picked a querril with Claiborne, 'n' he cut him inter pieces. They hed him up for 't, 'n' somehow they clared him. I don't see how they ever did, but they put 't off, 'n' put 't off, 'n' 't last they got him free; 'n' he lived on thar a spell, but he could n't stan' it; 'peared like he never hed no peace; 'n' he come over ter our 'us, 'n' sed he, 'Jake,' — they allers called daddy 'Jake,' or 'Uncle

Jake,' — 'Jake,' sed he, 'I can't stan' it, livin' hyar.' 'Why,' sez daddy, 'the law o' the country 's clar'd ye.' 'Yes,' sez he, 'but the law o' God hain't; 'n' I 've got Claiborne allers with me. Thar ain't any path so narrer, but he 's a walkin' in it, by my side, all day; 'n' come night, I sleep with him ter one side, 'n' my wife t' other; 'n' I can't stan' it!' Them 's ther very words I heered him say, 'n' I wuz n't ennythin' but a mite, but I did n't furgit it. Wall, sir, he went West, way aout hyar to Californy, 'n' he could n't stay thar nuther, 'n' he come back hum agin; 'n' I wuz bigger then, a gal grown, 'n' daddy sez to him, — I heern him, — 'Wal,' sez he, 'did Claiborne foller yer?' 'Yes,' sez he, 'he follered me. I 'll never git shet o' him in this world. He 's allers clost to me everywhar.' Yer see, 't was jest his conscience er whippin' him. Thet 's all 't wuz. 'T least, thet 's all I think 't wuz; though thar wuz those thet said 't wuz Claiborne's ghost. 'N' thet 'll be the way 't 'll be with this miser'ble Farrar. He 'll live ter wish he 'd let hisself be hanged er shot, er erry which way, ter git out er his misery."

Young Merrill listened with unwonted gravity to Aunt Ri's earnest words. They reached a depth in his nature which had been long untouched; a stratum, so to speak, which lay far beneath the surface. The character of the Western frontiersman is often a singular accumulation of such strata, — the training and beliefs of his earliest days overlain by

successions of unrelated and violent experiences, like geological deposits. Underneath the exterior crust of the most hardened and ruffianly nature often remains — its forms not yet quite fossilized — a realm full of the devout customs, doctrines, religious influences, which the boy knew, and the man remembers. By sudden upheaval, in some great catastrophe or struggle in his mature life, these all come again into the light. Assembly Catechism definitions, which he learned in his childhood, and has not thought of since, ring in his ears, and he is thrown into all manner of confusions and inconsistencies of feeling and speech by this clashing of the old and new man within him. It was much in this way that Aunt Ri's words smote upon young Merrill. He was not many years removed from the sound of a preaching of the straitest New England Calvinism. The wild frontier life had drawn him in and under, as in a whirlpool; but he was New Englander yet at heart.

"That's so, Aunt Ri!" he exclaimed. "That's so! I don't s'pose a man that's committed murder'll ever have any peace in this world, nor in the next, nuther, without he repents; but ye see this horse-stealin' business is different. 'T ain't murder to kill a hoss-thief, any way you can fix it; everybody admits that. A feller that's caught horse-stealin' had ought to be shot; and he will be, too, I tell you, in this country!"

A look of impatient despair spread over Aunt Ri's

face. "I hain't no patience left with yer," she said, "er talkin' abaout stealin' hosses ez ef hosses wuz more 'n human bein's! But lettin' thet all go, this Injun, he wuz crazy. Yer all knowed it. Thet Farrar knowed it. D' yer think ef he'd ben stealin' the hoss, he'd er left his own hoss in the corral, same ez, yer might say, leavin' his kyerd to say 't wuz he done it; 'n' the hoss er tied in plain sight 'n front uv his house fur ennybody ter see?"

"Left his own horse, so he did!" retorted Merrill. "A poor, miserable, knock-kneed old pony, that wa'n't worth twenty dollars; 'n' Jim's horse was worth two hundred, 'n' cheap at that."

"Thet ain't nuther heré nor thar in what we air sayin'," persisted Aunt Ri. "I ain't a speakin' on 't ez a swap er hosses. What I say is, he wa'n't tryin' to cover 't up thet he'd tuk the hoss. We air sum used ter hoss-thieves in Tennessee; but I never heered o' one yit thet left his name fur a refference berhind him, ter show which road he tuk, 'n' fastened ther stolen critter ter his front gate when he got hum! I allow me 'n' yeow hed n't better say anythin' much more on ther subjeck, fur I allow we air bound to querril ef we dew;" and nothing that Merrill said could draw another word out of Aunt Ri in regard to Alessandro's death. But there was another subject on which she was tireless, and her speech eloquent. It was the kindness and goodness of the Cahuilla people. The last vestige of her prejudice against Indians had melted and gone, in

the presence of their simple-hearted friendliness. "I 'll never hear a word said agin 'em, never, ter my longest day," she said. "The way the pore things hed jest stripped theirselves, to git things fur Ramony, beat all ever I see among white folks, 'n' I 've ben raound more 'n most. 'N' they wa'n't lookin' fur no pay, nuther; fur they did n't know, till Feeleepy 'n' me cum, thet she hed any folks ennywhar, 'n' they 'd ha' taken care on her till she died, jest the same. The sick allers ez took care on among them, they sed, 's long uz enny on 'em hez got a thing left. Thet 's ther way they air raised; I allow white folks might take a lesson on 'em, in thet; 'n' in heaps uv other things tew. Oh, I 'm done talkin' agin Injuns, naow, don't yeow fur-git it! But I know, fur all thet, 't won't make any difference; 'pears like there cudd n't nobody b'leeve ennythin' 'n this world 'thout seein' 't theirselves. I wuz thet way tew; I allow I hain't got no call ter talk; but I jest wish the hull world could see what I 've seen! Thet 's all!"

It was a sad day in the village when Ramona and her friends departed. Heartily as the kindly people rejoiced in her having found such a protector for herself and her child, and deeply as they felt Felipe's and Aunt Ri's good-will and gratitude towards them, they were yet conscious of a loss, — of a void. The gulf between them and the rest of the world seemed defined anew, their sense of isolation deepened, their hopeless poverty emphasized. Ramona, wife of Ales-

sandro, had been as their sister, — one of them; as such, she would have had share in all their life had to offer. But its utmost was nothing, was but hardship and deprivation; and she was being borne away from it, like one rescued, not so much from death, as from a life worse than death.

The tears streamed down Ramona's face as she bade them farewell. She embraced again and again the young mother who had for so many days suckled her child, even, it was said, depriving her own hardier babe that Ramona's should not suffer. "Sister, you have given me my child," she cried; "I can never thank you; I will pray for you all my life."

She made no inquiries as to Felipe's plans. Unquestioningly, like a little child, she resigned herself into his hands. A power greater than hers was ordering her way; Felipe was its instrument. No other voice spoke to guide her. The same old simplicity of acceptance which had characterized her daily life in her girlhood, and kept her serene and sunny then, — serene under trials, sunny in her routine of little duties, — had kept her serene through all the afflictions, and calm, if not sunny, under all the burdens of her later life; and it did not desert her even now.

Aunt Ri gazed at her with a sentiment as near to veneration as her dry, humorous, practical nature was capable of feeling. "I allow I donno but I sh'd cum ter believin' in saints tew," she said, "ef I wuz ter live 'long side er thet gal. 'Pears like she wuz

suthin' more 'n human. 'T beats me plum out, ther way she takes her troubles. Thar 's sum would say she hed n't no feelin'; but I allow she hez more 'n most folks. I kin see, 't ain't thet. I allow I did n't never expect ter think 's well uv prayin' to picters, 'n' strings er beads, 'n' sech; but ef 't 's thet keeps her up ther way she 's kept up, I allow thar 's more in it 'n it 's hed credit fur. I ain't gwine ter say enny more agin it, nor agin Injuns. 'Pears like I 'm gittin' heaps er new idears inter my head, these days. I 'll turn Injun, mebbe, afore I git through!"

The farewell to Aunt Ri was hardest of all. Ramona clung to her as to a mother. At times she felt that she would rather stay by her side than go home with Felipe; then she reproached herself for the thought, as for a treason and ingratitude. Felipe saw the feeling, and did not wonder at it. "Dear girl," he thought; "it is the nearest she has ever come to knowing what a mother's love is like!" And he lingered in San Bernardino week after week, on the pretence that Ramona was not yet strong enough to bear the journey home, when in reality his sole motive for staying was his reluctance to deprive her of Aunt Ri's wholesome and cheering companionship.

Aunt Ri was busily at work on a rag carpet for the Indian Agent's wife. She had just begun it, had woven only a few inches, on that dreadful morning when the news of Alessandro's death reached her. It was of her favorite pattern, the "hit-er-miss"

pattern, as she called it: no set stripes or regular alternation of colors, but ball after ball of the indiscriminately mixed tints, woven back and forth, on a warp of a single color. The constant variety in it, the unexpectedly harmonious blending of the colors, gave her delight, and afforded her a subject, too, of not unphilosophical reflection.

"Wall," she said, "it 's called ther 'hit-er-miss' pattren; but it 's 'hit' oftener 'n 't is 'miss.' Thar ain't enny accountin' fur ther way ther breadths 'll come, sometimes; 'pears like 't wuz kind er magic, when they air sewed tergether; 'n' I allow thet 's ther way it 's gwine ter be with heaps er things in this life. It 's jest a kind er 'hit-er-miss' pattren we air all on us livin' on; 't ain't much use tryin' ter reckon how 't 'll come aout; but the breadths doos fit heaps better 'n yer 'd think; come ter sew 'em,'t ain 't never no sech colors ez yer thought 't wuz gwine ter be, but it 's allers pooty, allers; never see a 'hit-er-miss' pattren 'n my life yit, thet wa'n't pooty. 'N' ther wa'n't never nobody fetched me rags, 'n' hed 'em all planned aout, 'n' jest ther way they wanted ther warp, 'n' jest haow ther stripes wuz ter come, 'n' all, thet they wa'n't orful diserpynted when they cum ter see 't done. It don't never look 's they thought 't would, never! I larned thet lesson airly; 'n' I allers make 'em write 't aout on a paper, jest ther wedth er every stripe, 'n' each er ther colors, so 's they kin see it 's what they ordered; 'r else they 'd allers say I hed n't wove 't 's I wuz told ter. I got ketched thet way oncet!

I allow ennybody 's a bawn fool gits ketched twice runnin' ther same way. But fur me, I 'll take ther 'hit-er-miss' pattren, every time, sir, straight along."

When the carpet was done, Aunt Ri took the roll in her own independent arms, and strode with it to the Agent's house. She had been biding the time when she should have this excuse for going there. Her mind was burdened with questions she wished to ask, information she wished to give, and she chose an hour when she knew she would find the Agent himself at home.

"I allow yer heered why I wuz behind time with this yere carpet," she said; "I wuz up ter San Jacinto Mounting, where thet Injun wuz murdered. We brung his widder 'n' ther baby daown with us, me 'n' her brother. He 's tuk her home ter his house ter live. He 's reel well off."

Yes, the Agent had heard this; he had wondered why the widow did not come to see him; he had expected to hear from her.

"Wall, I did hent ter her thet p'raps yer could dew something, ef she wuz ter tell yer all abaout it; but she allowed thar wa'n't enny use in talkin'. Ther jedge, he sed her witnessin' would n't be wuth nuthin' to no jury; 'n' thet wuz what I wuz a wantin' to ask yeow, ef thet wuz so."

"Yes, that is what the lawyers here told me," said the Agent. "I was going to have the man arrested, but they said it would be folly to bring the case to trial. The woman's testimony would not be believed."

"Yeow've got power ter git a man punished fur sellin' whiskey to Injuns, I notice," broke in Aunt Ri; "hain't yer? I see yeour man 'n' the marshal here arrestin' 'em pooty lively last month; they sed 't was yeour doin'; yeow was a gwine ter prossacute every livin' son o' hell — them wuz thar words — thet sold whiskey ter Injuns."

"That's so!" said the Agent. "So I am; I am determined to break up this vile business of selling whiskey to Indians. It is no use trying to do anything for them while they are made drunk in this way; it's a sin and a shame."

"Thet's so, I allow ter yeow," said Aunt Ri. "Thar ain't any gainsayin' thet. But ef yeow've got power ter git a man put in jail fur sellin' whiskey t' 'n Injun, 'n' hain't got power to git him punished ef he goes 'n' kills thet Injun, 't sems ter me thar 's suthin' cur'us abaout thet."

"That is just the trouble in my position here, Aunt Ri," he said. "I have no real power over my Indians, as I ought to have."

"What makes yer call 'em yeour Injuns?" broke in Aunt Ri.

The Agent colored. Aunt Ri was a privileged character, but her logical method of questioning was inconvenient.

"I only mean that they are under my charge," he said. "I don't mean that they belong to me in any way."

"Wall, I allow not," retorted Aunt Ri, "enny more

'n I dew. They air airnin' their livin', sech 's 't is, ef yer kin call it a livin'. I 've ben 'mongst 'em, naow, this hyar last tew weeks, 'n' I allow I 've hed my eyes opened ter some things. What 's thet docter er yourn, him thet they call the Agency docter, — what 's he got ter do?"

"To attend to the Indians of this Agency when they are sick," replied the Agent, promptly.

"Wall, thet 's what I heern; thet 's what yeow sed afore, 'n' thet 's why Alessandro, the Injun thet wuz murdered, — thet 's why he put his name down 'n yeour books, though 't went agin him orful ter do it. He wuz high-spereted, 'n' 'd allers took keer er hisself; but he 'd ben druv out er fust one place 'n' then another, tell he 'd got clar down, 'n' pore; 'n' he jest begged thet docter er yourn to go to see his little gal, 'n' the docter would n't; 'n' more 'n thet, he laughed at him fur askin'. 'N' they set the little thing on the hoss ter bring her here, 'n' she died afore they 'd come a mile with her; 'n' 't wuz thet, on top er all the rest, druv Alessandro crazy. He never hed none er them wandrin' spells till arter thet. Naow I allow thet wa'n't right er thet docter. I would n't hev no sech docter 's thet raound my Agency, ef I wuz yeow. Pr'aps yer never heered uv thet. I told Ramony I did n't bleeve yer knowed it, or ye 'd hev made him go."

"No, Aunt Ri," said the Agent; "I could not have done that; he is only required to doctor such Indians as come here."

"I allow, then, thar ain't any gret use en hevin' him at all," said Aunt Ri; "'pears like thar ain't more 'n a harndful uv Injuns raound here. I expect he gits well paid?" and she paused for an answer. None came. The Agent did not feel himself obliged to reveal to Aunt Ri what salary the Government paid the San Bernardino doctor for sending haphazard prescriptions to Indians he never saw.

After a pause Aunt Ri resumed: "Ef it ain't enny offence ter yeow, I allow I'd like ter know jest what 't is yeow air here ter dew fur these Injuns. I've got my feelin's considdable stirred up, bein' among 'em 'n' knowing this hyar one, thet's ben murdered. Hev ye got enny power to giv' 'em ennything, — food or sech? They air powerful pore, most on 'em."

"I have had a little fund for buying supplies for them in times of special suffering," replied the Agent, "a very little; and the Department has appropriated some money for wagons and ploughs; not enough, however, to supply every village; you see these Indians are in the main self-supporting."

"Thet's jest it," persisted Aunt Ri. "Thet's what I've ben seein'; 'n' thet's why I want so bad ter git at what 't is the Guvvermunt means ter hev yeow dew fur 'em. I allow ef yeow ain't ter feed 'em, an' ef yer can't put folks inter jail fur robbin' 'n' cheatin' 'em, not ter say killin' 'em, — ef yer can't dew ennythin' more 'n keep 'em from gettin' whiskey, wall, I'm free ter say —" Aunt Ri paused; she did

not wish to seem to reflect on the Agent's usefulness, and so concluded her sentence very differently from her first impulse, — "I 'm free ter say I should n't like ter stan' in yer shoes."

"You may very well say that, Aunt Ri," laughed the Agent, complacently. "It is the most troublesome Agency in the whole list, and the least satisfactory."

"Wall, I allow it mought be the least satisfyin'," rejoined the indefatigable Aunt Ri; "but I donno whar the trouble comes in, ef so be 's thar 's no more kin be done than yer wuz er tellin'." And she looked honestly puzzled.

"Look there, Aunt Ri!" said he, triumphantly, pointing to a pile of books and papers. "All those to be gone through with, and a report to be made out every month, and a voucher to be sent for every lead-pencil I buy. I tell you I work harder than I ever did in my life before, and for less pay."

"I allow yer hev hed easy times afore, then," retorted Aunt Ri, good-naturedly satirical, "ef yeow air plum tired doin' thet!" And she took her leave, not a whit clearer in her mind as to the real nature and function of the Indian Agency than she was in the beginning.

Through all of Ramona's journey home she seemed to herself to be in a dream. Her baby in her arms; the faithful creatures, Baba and Benito, gayly trotting along at a pace so swift that the carriage seemed gliding; Felipe by her side, — the dear Felipe, — his

eyes wearing the same bright and loving look as of old, — what strange thing was it which had happened to her to make it all seem unreal? Even the little one in her arms, — she, too, seemed unreal! Ramona did not know it, but her nerves were still partially paralyzed. Nature sends merciful anæsthetics in the shocks which almost kill us. In the very sharpness of the blow sometimes lies its own first healing. It would be long before Ramona would fully realize that Alessandro was dead. Her worst anguish was yet to come.

Felipe did not know and could not have understood this; and it was with a marvelling gratitude that he saw Ramona, day after day, placid, always ready with a smile when he spoke to her. Her gratitude for each thoughtfulness of his smote him like a reproach; all the more that he knew her gentle heart had never held a thought of reproach in it towards him. "Grateful to me!" he thought. "To me, who might have spared her all this woe if I had been strong!"

Never would Felipe forgive himself, — no, not to the day of his death. His whole life should be devoted to her and her child; but what a pitiful thing was that to render!

As they drew near home, he saw Ramona often try to conceal from him that she had shed tears. At last he said to her: "Dearest Ramona, do not fear to weep before me. I would not be any constraint on you. It is better for you to let the

tears come freely, my sister. They are healing to wounds."

"I do not think so, Felipe," replied Ramona. "Tears are only selfish and weak. They are like a cry because we are hurt. It is not possible always to keep them back; but I am ashamed when I have wept, and think also that I have sinned, because I have given a sad sight to others. Father Salvierderra always said that it was a duty to look happy, no matter how much we might be suffering."

"That is more than human power can do!" said Felipe.

"I think not," replied Ramona. "If it were, Father Salvierderra would not have commanded it. And do you not recollect, Felipe, what a smile his face always wore? and his heart had been broken for many, many years before he died. Alone, in the night, when he prayed, he used to weep, from the great wrestling he had with God, he told me; but we never saw him except with a smile. When one thinks in the wilderness, alone, Felipe, many things become clear. I have been learning, all these years in the wilderness, as if I had had a teacher. Sometimes I almost thought that the spirit of Father Salvierderra was by my side putting thoughts into my mind. I hope I can tell them to my child when she is old enough. She will understand them quicker than I did, for she has Alessandro's soul; you can see that by her eyes. And all these things of which I speak were in his heart from his childhood. They belong to

the air and the sky and the sun, and all trees know them."

When Ramona spoke thus of Alessandro, Felipe marvelled in silence. He himself had been afraid to mention Alessandro's name; but Ramona spoke it as if he were yet by her side. Felipe could not fathom this. There were to be many things yet which Felipe could not fathom in this lovely, sorrowing, sunny sister of his.

When they reached the house, the servants, who had been on the watch for days, were all gathered in the court-yard, old Marda and Juan Can heading the group; only two absent, — Margarita and Luigo. They had been married some months before, and were living at the Ortega's ranch, where Luigo, to Juan Can's scornful amusement, had been made head shepherd.

On all sides were beaming faces, smiles, and glad cries of greeting. Underneath these were affectionate hearts quaking with fear lest the home-coming be but a sad one after all. Vaguely they knew a little of what their dear Señorita had been through since she left them; it seemed that she must be sadly altered by so much sorrow, and that it would be terrible to her to come back to the place so full of painful associations. "And the Señora gone, too," said one of the outdoor hands, as they were talking it over; "it's not the same place at all that it was when the Señora was here."

"Humph!" muttered Juan Can, more consequen-

tial and overbearing than ever, for this year of absolute control of the estate. "Humph! that's all you know. A good thing the Señora died when she did, I can tell you! We'd never have seen the Señorita back here else; I can tell you that, my man! And for my part, I'd much rather be under Señor Felipe and the Señorita than under the Señora, peace to her ashes! She had her day. They can have theirs now."

When these loving and excited retainers saw Ramona — pale, but with her own old smile on her face — coming towards them with her babe in her arms, they broke into wild cheering, and there was not a dry eye in the group.

Singling out old Marda by a glance, Ramona held out the baby towards her, and said in her old gentle, affectionate voice, "I am sure you will love my baby, Marda!"

"Señorita! Señorita! God bless you, Señorita!" they cried; and closed up their ranks around the baby, touching her, praising her, handing her from one to another.

Ramona stood for a few seconds watching them; then she said, "Give her to me, Marda. I will myself carry her into the house;" and she moved towards the inner door.

"This way, dear; this way," cried Felipe. "It is Father Salvierderra's room I ordered to be prepared for you, because it is so sunny for the baby!"

"Thanks, kind Felipe!" cried Ramona, and her

eyes said more than her words. She knew he had divined the one thing she had most dreaded in returning, — the crossing again the threshold of her own room. It would be long now before she would enter that room. Perhaps she would never enter it. How tender and wise of Felipe!

Yes; Felipe was both tender and wise, now. How long would the wisdom hold the tenderness in leash, as he day after day looked upon the face of this beautiful woman, — so much more beautiful now than she had been before her marriage, that Felipe sometimes, as he gazed at her, thought her changed even in feature? But in this very change lay a spell which would for a long time surround her, and set her as apart from lover's thoughts as if she were guarded by a cordon of viewless spirits. There was a rapt look of holy communion on her face, which made itself felt by the dullest perception, and sometimes overawed even where it attracted. It was the same thing which Aunt Ri had felt, and formulated in her own humorous fashion. But old Marda put it better, when, one day, in reply to a half-terrified, low-whispered suggestion of Juan Can, to the effect that it was "a great pity the Señor Felipe had n't married the Señorita years ago, — what if he were to do it yet?" she said, also under her breath, "It is my opinion he 'd as soon think of Saint Catharine herself! Not but that it would be a great thing if it could be!"

And now the thing that the Señora had imaged to herself so often had come about, — the presence of

a little child in her house, on the veranda, in the garden, everywhere; the sunny, joyous, blest presence. But how differently had it come! Not Felipe's child, as she proudly had pictured, but the child of Ramona: the friendless, banished Ramona returned now into full honor and peace as the daughter of the house, — Ramona, widow of Alessandro. If the child had been Felipe's own, he could not have felt for it a greater love. From the first, the little thing had clung to him as only second to her mother. She slept hours in his arms, one little hand hid in his dark beard, close to his lips, and kissed again and again when no one saw. Next to Ramona herself in Felipe's heart came Ramona's child; and on the child he could lavish the fondness he felt that he could never dare to show to the mother. Month by month it grew clearer to Felipe that the mainsprings of Ramona's life were no longer of this earth; that she walked as one in constant fellowship with one unseen. Her frequent and calm mention of Alessandro did not deceive him. It did not mean a lessening grief: it meant an unchanged relation.

One thing weighed heavily on Felipe's mind, — the concealed treasure. A sense of humiliation withheld him, day after day, from speaking of it. But he could have no peace until Ramona knew it. Each hour that he delayed the revelation he felt himself almost as guilty as he had held his mother to be. At last he spoke. He had not said many words, before Ramona interrupted him. "Oh, yes!" she said. "I knew

about those things; your mother told me. When we were in such trouble, I used to wish sometimes we could have had a few of the jewels. But they were all given to the Church. That was what the Señora Ortegna said must be done with them if I married against your mother's wishes."

It was with a shame-stricken voice that Felipe replied: "Dear Ramona, they were not given to the Church. You know Father Salvierderra died; and I suppose my mother did not know what to do with them. She told me about them just as she was dying."

"But why did you not give them to the Church, dear?" asked Ramona, simply.

"Why?" cried Felipe. "Because I hold them to be yours, and yours only. I would never have given them to the Church, until I had sure proof that you were dead and had left no children."

Ramona's eyes were fixed earnestly on Felipe's face. "You have not read the Señora Ortegna's letter?" she said.

"Yes, I have," he replied, "every word of it."

"But that said I was not to have any of the things if I married against the Señora Moreno's will."

Felipe groaned. Had his mother lied? "No, dear," he said, "that was not the word. It was, if you married unworthily."

Ramona reflected. "I never recollected the words," she said. "I was too frightened; but I thought that was what it meant. I did not marry unworthily. Do

you feel sure, Felipe, that it would be honest for me to take them for my child?"

"Perfectly," said Felipe.

"Do you think Father Salvierderra would say I ought to keep them?"

"I am sure of it, dear."

"I will think about it, Felipe. I cannot decide hastily. Your mother did not think I had any right to them, if I married Alessandro. That was why she showed them to me. I never knew of them till then. I took one thing, — a handkerchief of my father's. I was very glad to have it; but it got lost when we went from San Pasquale. Alessandro rode back a half-day's journey to find it for me; but it had blown away. I grieved sorely for it."

The next day Ramona said to Felipe: "Dear Felipe, I have thought it all over about those jewels. I believe it will be right for my daughter to have them. Can there be some kind of a paper written for me to sign, to say that if she dies they are all to be given to the Church, — to Father Salvierderra's College, in Santa Barbara? That is where I would rather have them go."

"Yes, dear," said Felipe; "and then we will put them in some safer place. I will take them to Los Angeles when I go. It is wonderful no one has stolen them all these years!"

And so a second time the Ortegna jewels were passed on, by a written bequest, into the keeping of that mysterious, certain, uncertain thing we call the

future, and delude ourselves with the fancy that we can have much to do with its shaping.

Life ran smoothly in the Moreno household, — smoothly to the eye. Nothing could be more peaceful, fairer to see, than the routine of its days, with the simple pleasures, light tasks, and easy diligence of all. Summer and winter were alike sunny, and had each its own joys. There was not an antagonistic or jarring element; and, flitting back and forth, from veranda to veranda, garden to garden, room to room, equally at home and equally welcome everywhere, there went perpetually, running, frisking, laughing, rejoicing, the little child that had so strangely drifted into this happy shelter, — the little Ramona. As unconscious of aught sad or fateful in her destiny as the blossoms with which it was her delight to play, she sometimes seemed to her mother to have been from the first in some mysterious way disconnected from it, removed, set free from all that could ever by any possibility link her to sorrow.

Ramona herself bore no impress of sorrow; rather her face had now an added radiance. There had been a period, soon after her return, when she felt that she for the first time waked to the realization of her bereavement; when every sight, sound, and place seemed to cry out, mocking her with the name and the memory of Alessandro. But she wrestled with this absorbing grief as with a sin; setting her will steadfastly to the purposes of each day's duty, and, most

of all, to the duty of joyfulness. She repeated to herself Father Salvierderra's sayings, till she more than knew them by heart; and she spent long hours of the night in prayer, as it had been his wont to do.

No one but Felipe dreamed of these vigils and wrestlings. He knew them; and he knew, too, when they ceased, and the new light of a new victory diffused itself over Ramona's face: but neither did the first dishearten, nor the latter encourage him. Felipe was a clearer-sighted lover now than he had been in his earlier youth. He knew that into the world where Ramona really lived he did not so much as enter; yet her every act, word, look, was full of loving thoughtfulness of and for him, loving happiness in his companionship. And while this was so, all Felipe's unrest could not make him unhappy.

There were other causes entering into this unrest besides his yearning desire to win Ramona for his wife. Year by year the conditions of life in California were growing more distasteful to him. The methods, aims, standards of the fast incoming Americans were to him odious. Their boasted successes, the crowding of colonies, schemes of settlement and development, — all were disagreeable and irritating. The passion for money and reckless spending of it, the great fortunes made in one hour, thrown away in another, savored to Felipe's mind more of brigandage and gambling than of the occupations of gentlemen. He loathed them. Life under the new government grew more and more intolerable to him; both his

hereditary instincts and prejudices, and his temperament, revolted. He found himself more and more alone in the country. Even the Spanish tongue was less and less spoken. He was beginning to yearn for Mexico, — for Mexico, which he had never seen, yet yearned for like an exile. There he might yet live among men of his own race and degree, and of congenial beliefs and occupations. Whenever he thought of this change, always came the quick memory of Ramona. Would she be willing to go? Could it be that she felt a bond to this land, in which she had known nothing but suffering?

At last he asked her. To his unutterable surprise, Ramona cried: "Felipe! The saints be praised! I should never have told you. I did not think that you could wish to leave this estate. But my most beautiful dream for Ramona would be, that she should grow up in Mexico."

And as she spoke, Felipe understood by a lightning intuition, and wondered that he had not foreknown it, that she would spare her daughter the burden she had gladly, heroically borne herself, in the bond of race.

The question was settled. With gladness of heart almost more than he could have believed possible, Felipe at once communicated with some rich American proprietors who had desired to buy the Moreno estate. Land in the valley had so greatly advanced in value, that the sum he received for it was larger than he had dared to hope; was ample for the reali-

zation of all his plans for the new life in Mexico. From the hour that this was determined, and the time for their sailing fixed, a new expression came into Ramona's face. Her imagination was kindled. An untried future beckoned, — a future which she would embrace and conquer for her daughter. Felipe saw the look, felt the change, and for the first time hoped. It would be a new world, a new life; why not a new love? She could not always be blind to his devotion; and when she saw it, could she refuse to reward it? He would be very patient, and wait long, he thought. Surely, since he had been patient so long without hope, he could be still more patient now that hope had dawned! But patience is not hope's province in breasts of lovers. From the day when Felipe first thought to himself, "She will yet be mine," it grew harder, and not easier, for him to refrain from pouring out his love in words. Her tender sisterliness, which had been such balm and comfort to him, grew at times intolerable; and again and again her gentle spirit was deeply disquieted with the fear that she had displeased him, so strangely did he conduct himself.

He had resolved that nothing should tempt him to disclose to her his passion and its dreams, until they had reached their new home. But there came a moment which mastered him, and he spoke.

It was in Monterey. They were to sail on the morrow, and had been on board the ship to complete the last arrangements. They were rowed back to

shore in a little boat. A full moon shone. Ramona sat bareheaded in the end of the boat, and the silver radiance from the water seemed to float up around her, and invest her as with a myriad halos. Felipe gazed at her till his senses swam; and when, on stepping from the boat, she put her hand in his, and said, as she had said hundreds of times before, "Dear Felipe, how good you are!" he clasped her hands wildly, and cried, "Ramona, my love! Oh, can you not love me?"

The moonlight was bright as day. They were alone on the shore. Ramona gazed at him for one second, in surprise. Only for a second; then she knew all. "Felipe! My brother!" she cried, and stretched out her hands as if in warning.

"No! I am not your brother!" he cried. "I will not be your brother! I would rather die!"

"Felipe!" cried Ramona again. This time her voice recalled him to himself. It was a voice of terror and of pain.

"Forgive me, my sweet one!" he exclaimed. "I will never say it again. But I have loved you so long — so long!"

Ramona's head had fallen forward on her breast, her eyes fixed on the shining sands; the waves rose and fell, rose and fell, at her feet gently as sighs. A great revelation had come to Ramona. In this supreme moment of Felipe's abandonment of all disguises, she saw his whole past life in a new light. Remorse smote her. "Dear Felipe," she said, clasp-

ing her hands, "I have been very selfish. I did not know — "

"Of course you did not, love," said Felipe. "How could you? But I have never loved any one else. I have always loved you. Can you not learn to love me? I did not mean to tell you for a long time yet. But now I have spoken; I cannot hide it any more."

Ramona drew nearer to him, still with her hands clasped. "I have always loved you," she said. "I love no other living man; but, Felipe," — her voice sank to a solemn whisper, — "do you not know, Felipe, that part of me is dead, — dead? can never live again? You could not want me for your wife, Felipe, when part of me is dead!"

Felipe threw his arms around her. He was beside himself with joy. "You would not say that if you did not think you could be my wife," he cried. "Only give yourself to me, my love, I care not whether you call yourself dead or alive!"

Ramona stood quietly in his arms. Ah, well for Felipe that he did not know, never could know, the Ramona that Alessandro had known. This gentle, faithful, grateful Ramona, asking herself fervently now if she would do her brother a wrong, yielding up to him what seemed to her only the broken fragment of a life; weighing his words, not in the light of passion, but of calmest, most unselfish affection, — ah, how unlike was she to that Ramona who flung herself on Alessandro's breast, crying, "Take me

with you! I would rather die than have you leave me!"

Ramona had spoken truth. Part of her was dead. But Ramona saw now, with infallible intuition, that even as she had loved Alessandro, so Felipe loved her. Could she refuse to give Felipe happiness, when he had saved her, saved her child? What else now remained for them, these words having been spoken? "I will be your wife, dear Felipe," she said, speaking solemnly, slowly, "if you are sure it will make you happy, and if you think it is right."

"Right!" ejaculated Felipe, mad with the joy unlooked for so soon. "Nothing else would be right! My Ramona, I will love you so, you will forget you ever said that part of you was dead!"

A strange look which startled Felipe swept across Ramona's face; it might have been a moonbeam. It passed. Felipe never saw it again.

General Moreno's name was still held in warm remembrance in the city of Mexico, and Felipe found himself at once among friends. On the day after their arrival he and Ramona were married in the cathedral, old Marda and Juan Can, with his crutches, kneeling in proud joy behind them. The story of the romance of their lives, being widely rumored, greatly enhanced the interest with which they were welcomed. The beautiful young Señora Moreno was the theme of the city; and Felipe's bosom thrilled with pride to see the gentle dignity of demeanor by which she was distinguished in all assemblages. It

was indeed a new world, a new life. Ramona might well doubt her own identity. But undying memories stood like sentinels in her breast. When the notes of doves, calling to each other, fell on her ear, her eyes sought the sky, and she heard a voice saying, "Majella!" This was the only secret her loyal, loving heart had kept from Felipe. A loyal, loving heart indeed it was, — loyal, loving, serene. Few husbands so blest as the Señor Felipe Moreno.

Sons and daughters came to bear his name. The daughters were all beautiful; but the most beautiful of them all, and, it was said, the most beloved by both father and mother, was the eldest one: the one who bore the mother's name, and was only step-daughter to the Señor, — Ramona, — Ramona, daughter of Alessandro the Indian.

THE END

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